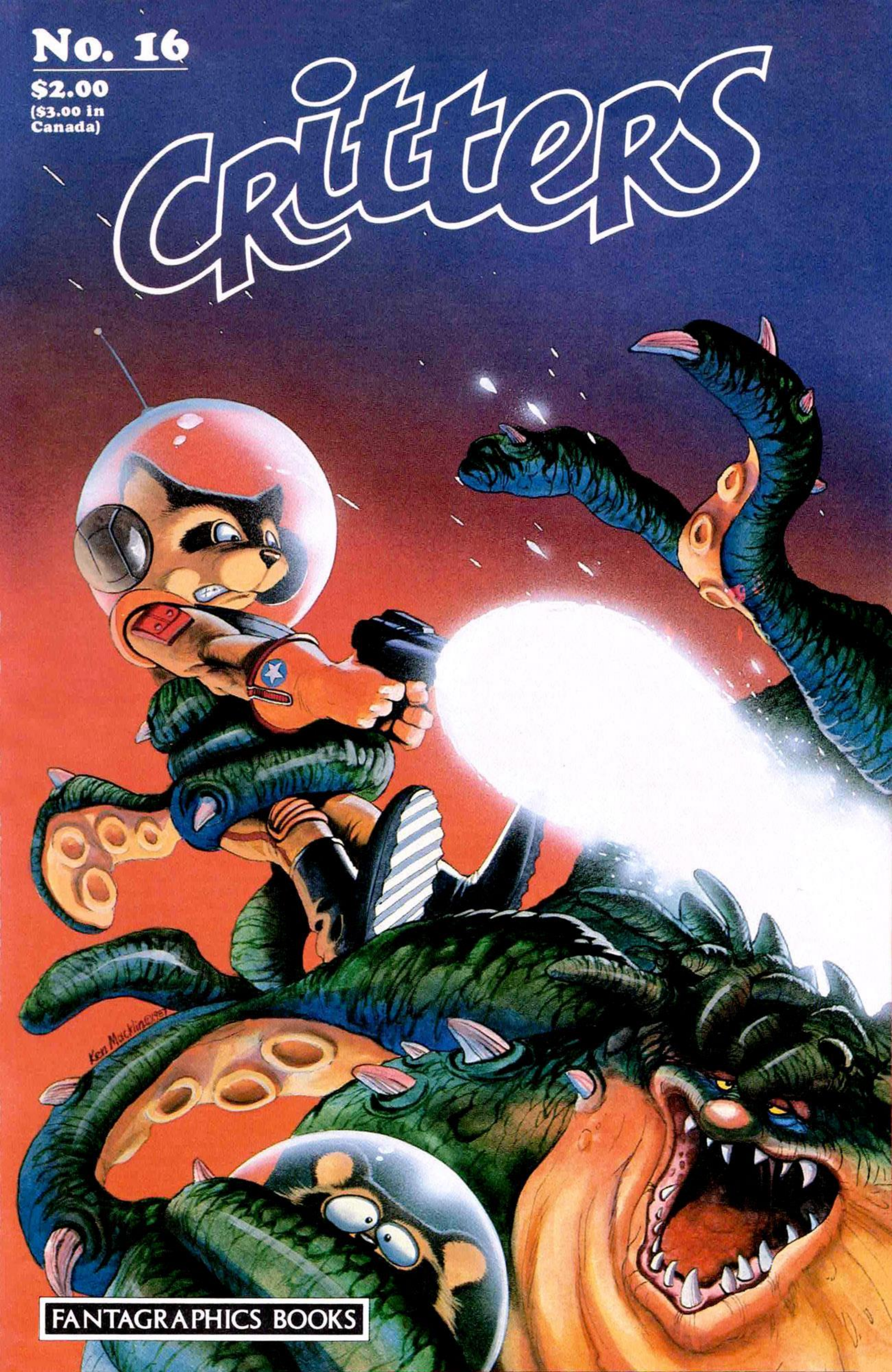
No. 16

$2.00
($3.00 in Canada)

Critters



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

No. 16 Sept.

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The frogified wizard tries to get his revenge on the unsuspecting Hermy.
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by FREDDY MILTON
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◄ **Birthright II** ►
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LETTERS

Dear Kim,
Critters is great! "Birthright II" and "Usagi Yojimbo" have been terrific. **CBG**'s Don Thompson (any relation?) gave it an A+. Good work!

Now some questions:

1) Now that Michael T. Gilbert has left **Elric**, any chance **now** of him doing a new Wraith story?

2) In #10, Steven Laughlin asked if there was going to be a Usagi T-shirt and you said one **was** available, with ordering information running in the next issue (#11). It didn't. What happened???

3) In the latest issue (#13), you talked about the paper change. Now I understand you have to pay more per copy with the low print run. But now you've got a lesser grade paper plus you pay cheaper shipping costs, who don't you pass some of your savings on to the readers? Lower the price to $1.50 or $1.75 or go back to the old format. You seem to have done very well on the previous issues. So how about it?

Thanks for your time.

Robbie Lewis
Bristol, TN

(0) I'm not related to Don Thompson.

(1) Even without ELRIC, Mike Gilbert's still pretty busy, but I hope you enjoyed his one-pager last issue.

(2) See USAGI YOJIMBO #2 for a T-shirt ad.

(3) Good try, but we don't pay shipping costs on black-and-white comics, so we aren't saving anything. More on the paper controversy below. **—KT**

Dear **Critters**,

Before I move on to less necessary manners, I wish to sincerely commend you for turning out a consistently quality publicaton, which is not a breeze to find on the comic shelves today. It's always a pleasure to find present and/or back issue of **Critters** that I am without.

Stan Sakai figures heavily in my purchases, and his appearance in your mag always demands immediate cash action. Steve Gallaci's work, while intriguing and inventive beyond compare, demands (for me, at least) one's absolute concentration and devotion. I admire his work in **Critters, Albedo** and **Zell Swordsdancer** greatly, as I do his contributions to **Rowrbrazzle**. I flipped hrough the first issue of **Fusion** recently, but since the art was not pure Gallaci, I am still filled with indecision. Not only am I a purist, which can be extremely aggravating to some people (understandably), but I am also one who tends to wait until something is **definitely** a hit on the shelves before running out and snatching up current and back copies. This not only results in many unreachable losses, such as the 0, 1 and 2 issues of **Albedo**, but renders my wallet much lighter than I would desire it. Oh well.

My collection of **Critters** presently consists of issues #1, 3, 6, and 8-11. My order is already in for #2, along with a 6-issue subscription. Besides **Critters**, I am also an avid fan of Mike Kazaleh's space satire, **Captain Jack**. I have read previously that many people have preferred the style of **Captain Jack** #1-2. These are good, to be sure, but I believe the comic has improved considerably with the romance between Herman and Janet. It's nice to see something really unusual and really involving once in a while.

While I think of it, my deepest

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 32]

Critters #16, September, 1987. **Critters** is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1987 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art © 1987 their respective creators: Steven A. Gallacci, Ken Macklin, Freddy Milton, and Stan Sakai. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and the creators. No similarity between the any of the names, characters, persons, animals, and institutions in **Critters** and those of any living or dead persons or beasties is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to **Critters** become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: May, 1987. Available directly from the publisher for $2.00 + 75¢ postage and handling: Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301.

THE ADVENTURES OF NILSON GROUNDTHUMPER AND HERMY

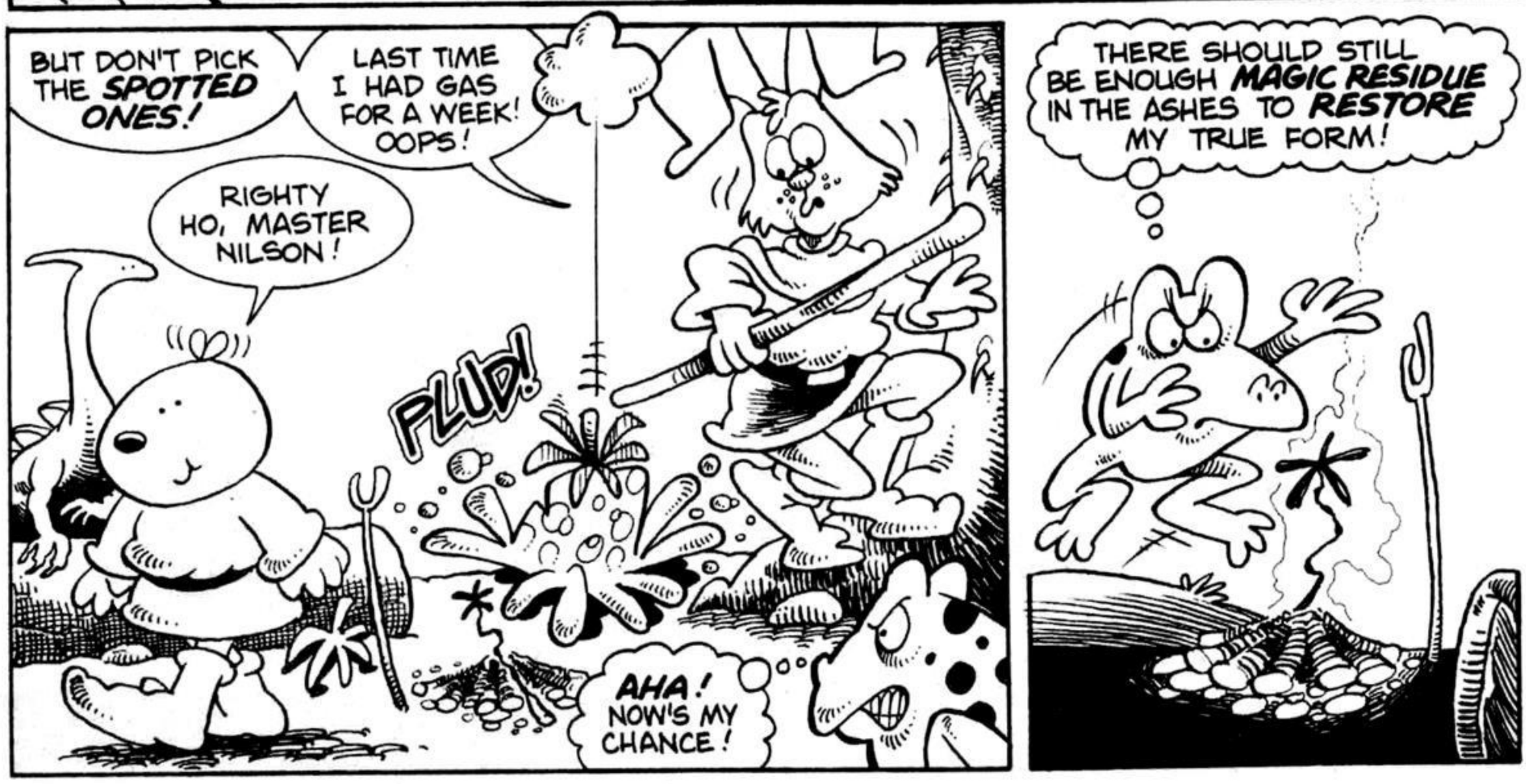
SÈNOGARA, the grumpy wizard, has been unknowingly turned into a toad by Hermy and his magic wand unwittingly burned by our pair of unwits.*

*CRITTERS #5

HERMY, WHY DON'T YOU COLLECT SOME MUSHROOMS FOR OUR BREAKFAST WHILE I PICK US SOME MORE CANTERBERRIES.

RIBBIT!

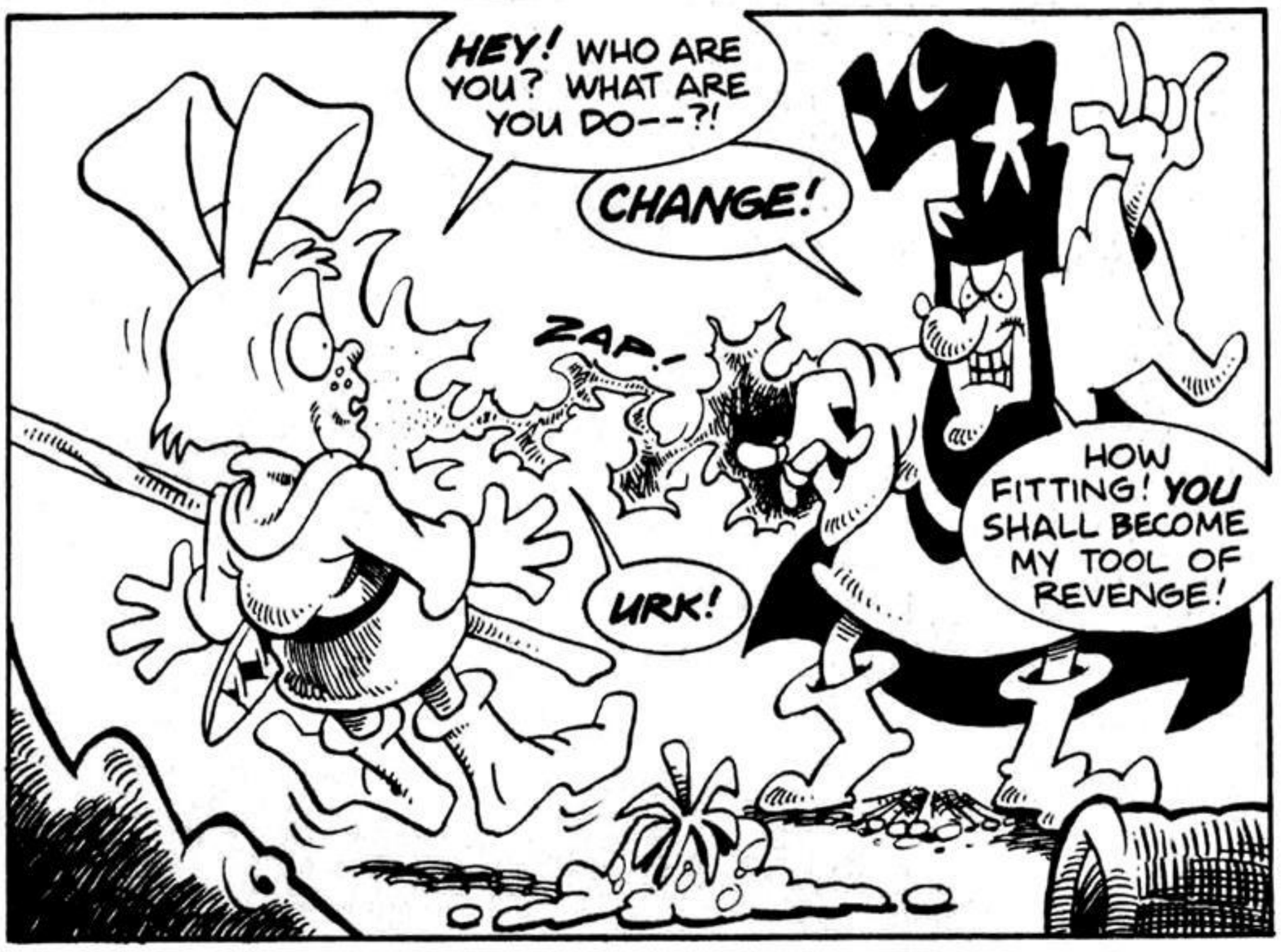
SURE THING, MASTER NILSON.



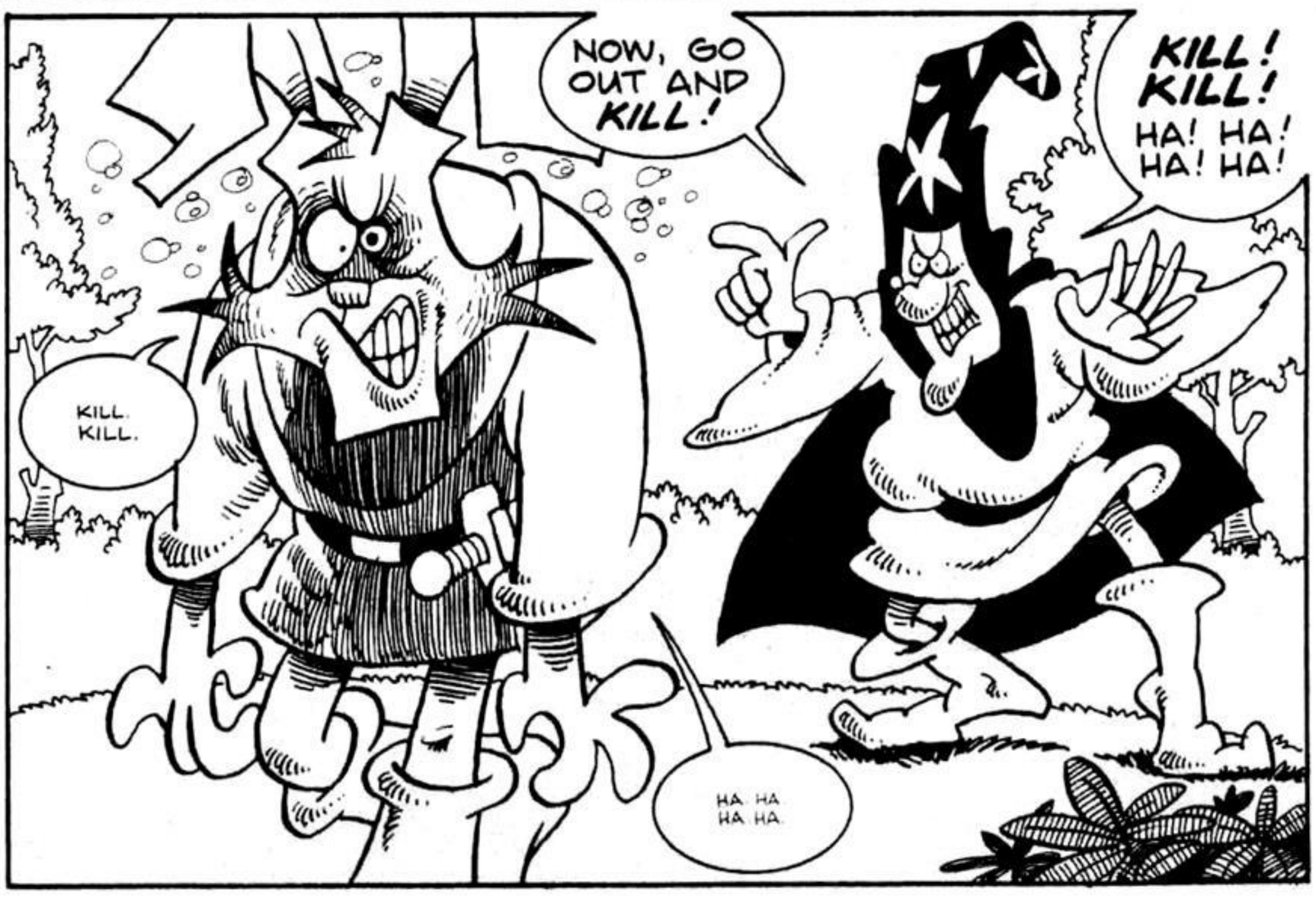
POOF!

AHA! NOW TO GET EVEN WITH THAT LITTLE RUNT!
WHAT? MY FOOT!

HA! THAT'S BETTER!
AND I'VE STILL GOT ENOUGH POWER FOR ONE MORE TEMPORARY SPELL!
SHAKE! SHAKE!
POP!


HEY! WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DO--?!
CHANGE!
ZAP!
URK!
HOW FITTING! YOU SHALL BECOME MY TOOL OF REVENGE!

ULP.


NOW, GO OUT AND KILL!
KILL. KILL.
KILL! KILL! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA HA HA HA

HA! I WILL BE AVENGED WHEN MY MONSTER KILLS HIS BEST FRIEND! HA! HA! AND I'M NO LONGER A WARTY, SLIMY, UGLY TOAD! HA! HA! I'M SO HAPPY I'LL CELEBRATE BY TREATING MYSELF TO A LARGE BOWL OF FLIES!

HERMY DON'T KNOW WHY MASTER NILSON DON'T LIKE THE SPOTTY ONES. THEY'RE SO MUCH PRETTIER. HERMY WILL SURPRISE HIM WITH SOME ANYWAY. HE WILL BURST WITH JOY!

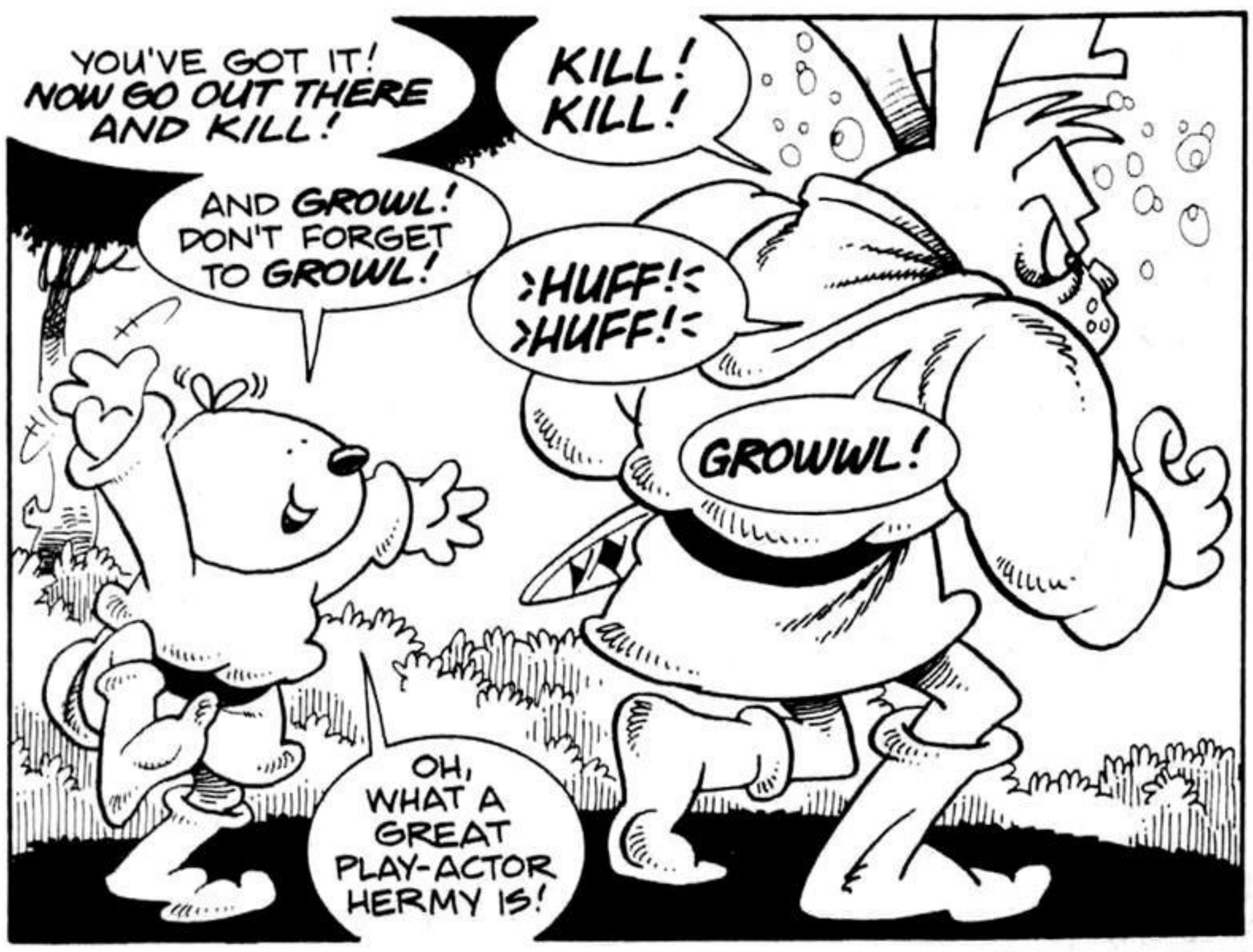
OH, HALLOO, MASTER NILSON. LOOK WHAT HERMY GOT. SAY-- ARE YOU PLAY-ACTING A GAME? HERMY WILL PLAY TOO!
KILL. KILL.

THAT'S NOT HOW TO PLAY-ACT! GOOD OL' HERMY WILL TEACH YOU TO BE MORE CONVINCING!
KILL. KILL.
?

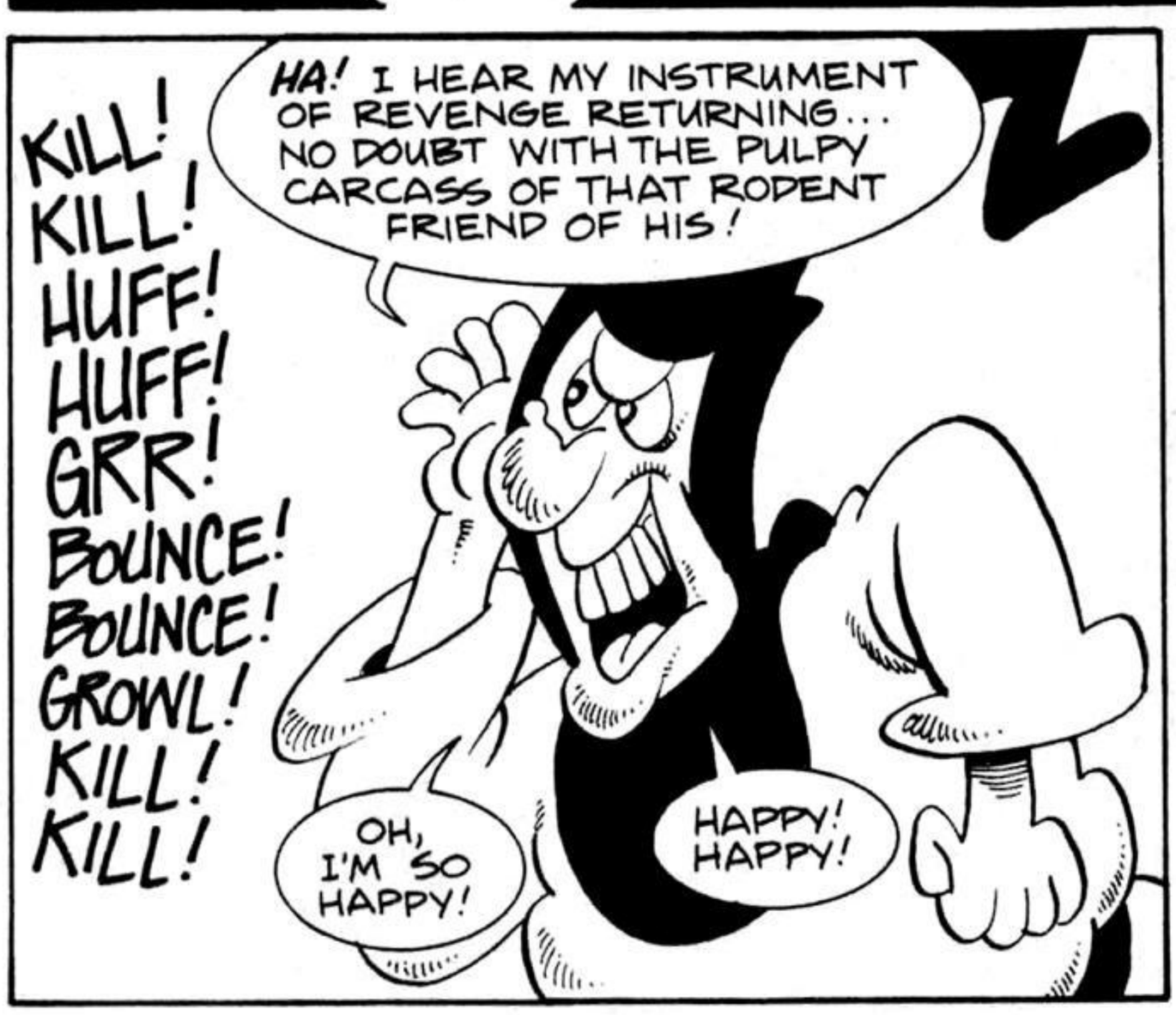
FIRST YELL, "KILL! KILL!" AND BREATHE HEAVY-LIKE! >HUFF< >HUFF< >HUFF<
KILL! KILL!
>HUFF!< >HUFF!<

NOW ROLL YOUR EYE ORBS!
KILL! KILL!
>HUFF!< >HUFF!<

NOW JUMP UP AND DOWN AND YELL, "KILL! KILL!"
KILL! KILL!
>HUFF!< >HUFF!<
BOUNCE
BOUNCE BOUNCE


YOU'VE GOT IT! NOW GO OUT THERE AND KILL!
KILL! KILL!
AND GROWL! DON'T FORGET TO GROWL!
>HUFF!< >HUFF!<
GROWWL!
OH, WHAT A GREAT PLAY-ACTOR HERMY IS!

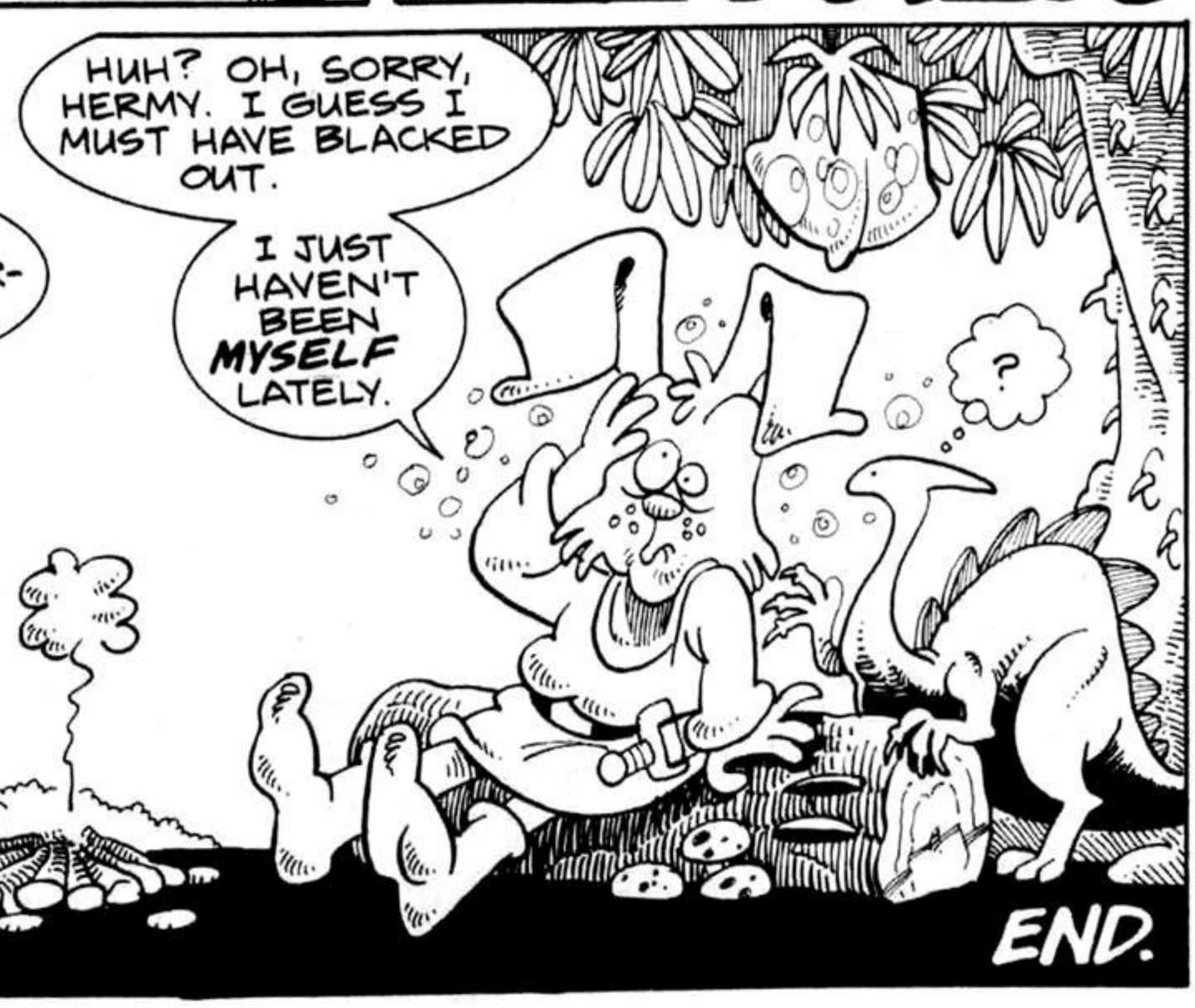
THE SPELL WILL BE WEARING OFF SOON BUT THE DEED SHOULD BE DONE BY NOW! FOR A WHILE I HAD MY DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER I HAD ENOUGH POWER TO TRULY TURN THAT MONSTER AGAINST HIS FRIEND!
OH, I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE MANGLED REMAINS!


KILL! KILL! HUFF! HUFF! GRR! BOUNCE! BOUNCE! GROWL! KILL! KILL!
HA! I HEAR MY INSTRUMENT OF REVENGE RETURNING... NO DOUBT WITH THE PULPY CARCASS OF THAT RODENT FRIEND OF HIS!
OH, I'M SO HAPPY!
HAPPY! HAPPY!

KILL!
HAP-- UH OH.

KILL! SPLAT! GOUGE! SPLUT! CRUNCH! PULP!

HALLOO AGAIN, MASTER NILSON! LOOKY WHAT HERMY GOT!
WHERE IS YOUR CANTER-BERRIES?

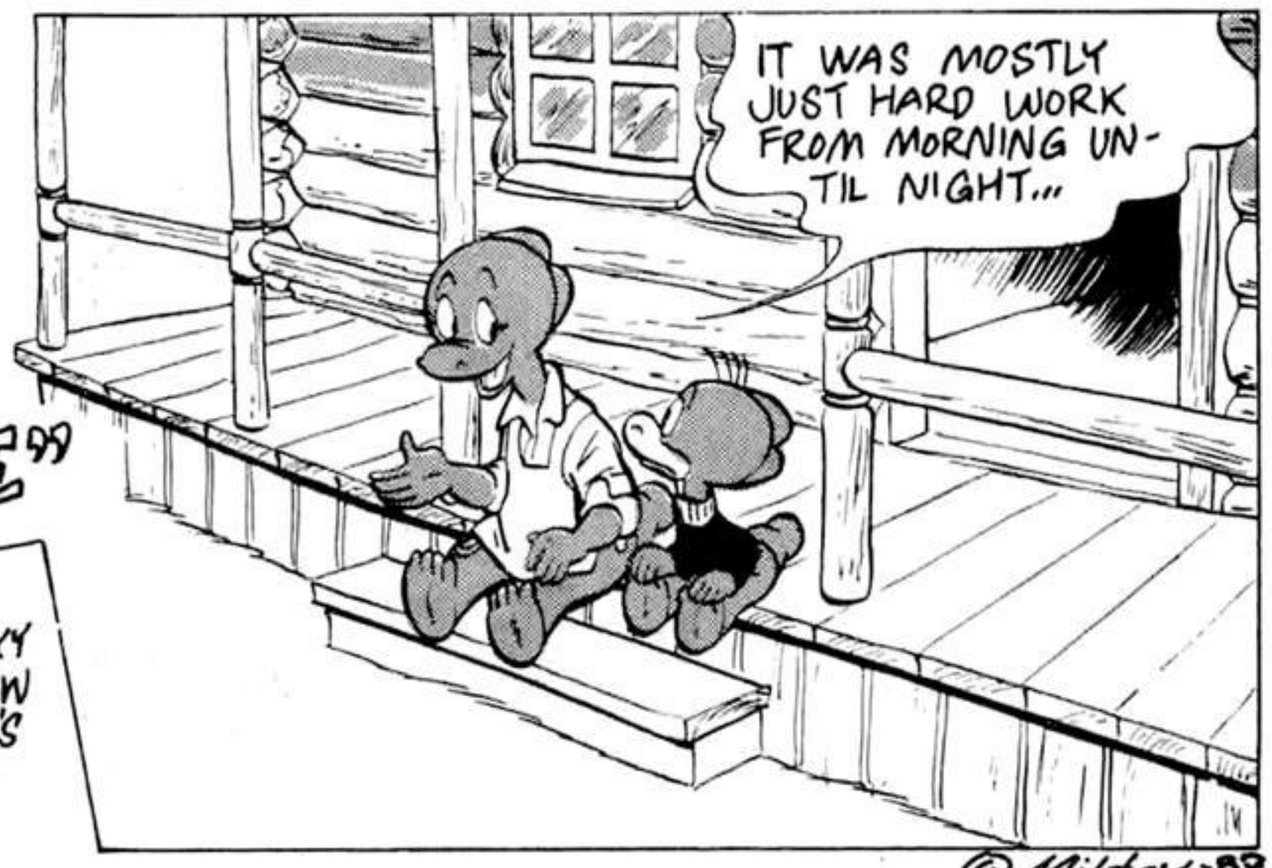

HUH? OH, SORRY, HERMY. I GUESS I MUST HAVE BLACKED OUT.
I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN MYSELF LATELY.
?
END.

Freddy Milton's Gnuff

"FOR THE LOVE OF GNELLIE" PART II

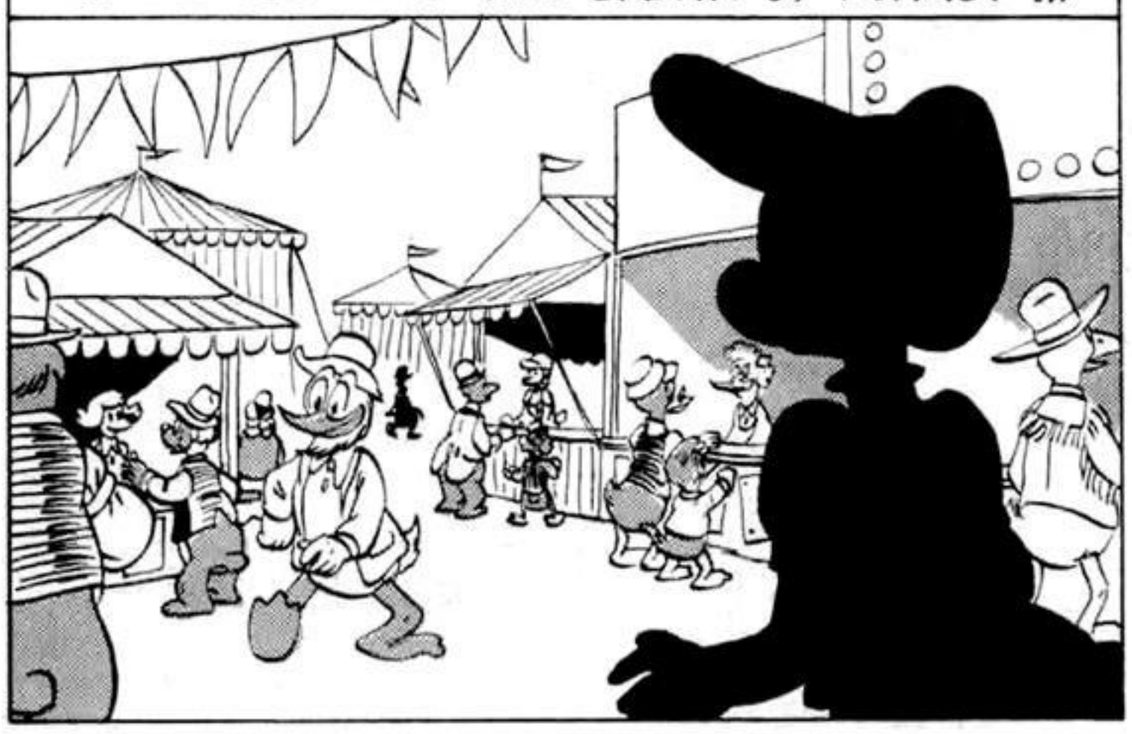
FREDDY MILTON

WHEN THE GNUFFS STILL LIVED IN THE BIG WOODS, GNICKY ASKED GNELLIE ONE DAY HOW THINGS WERE IN THE FARM'S EARLY DAYS...



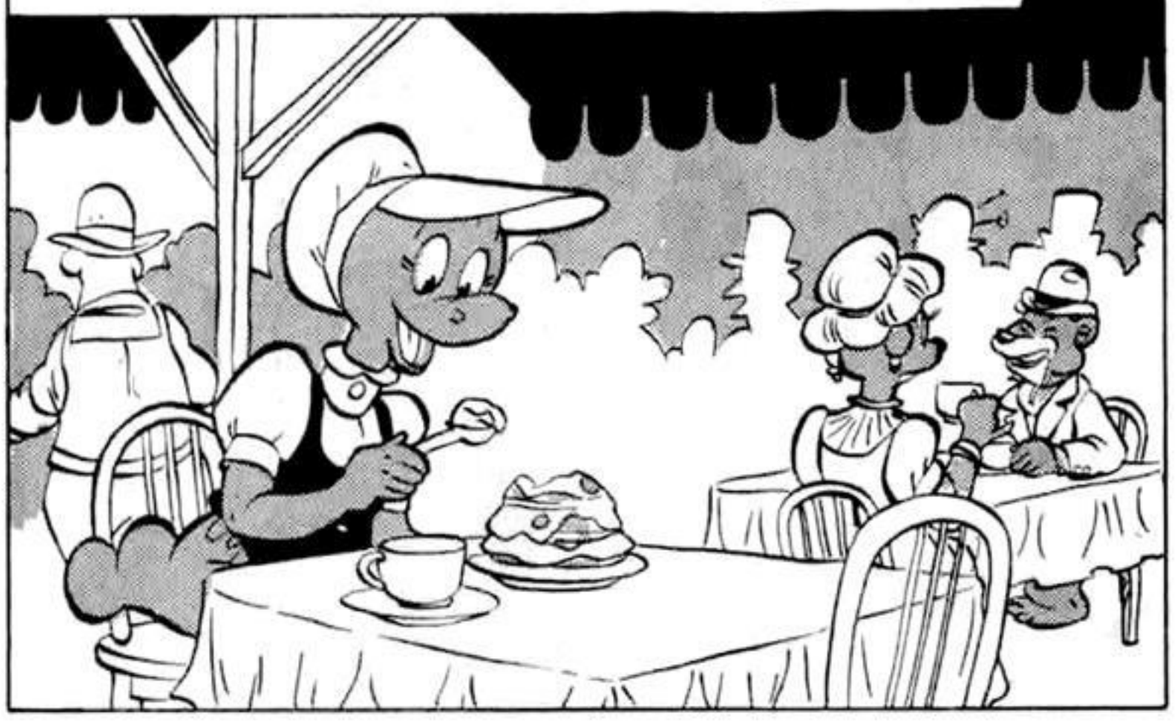
© Milton-89

BUT IN THE SUMMER THERE WAS A FAIR IN THE VILLAGE THAT HAD GROWN UP NEARBY ...



... SO I FORGOT EVERYTHING FOR A WHILE AND ENJOYED MYSELF TO MY HEARTS CONTENT...

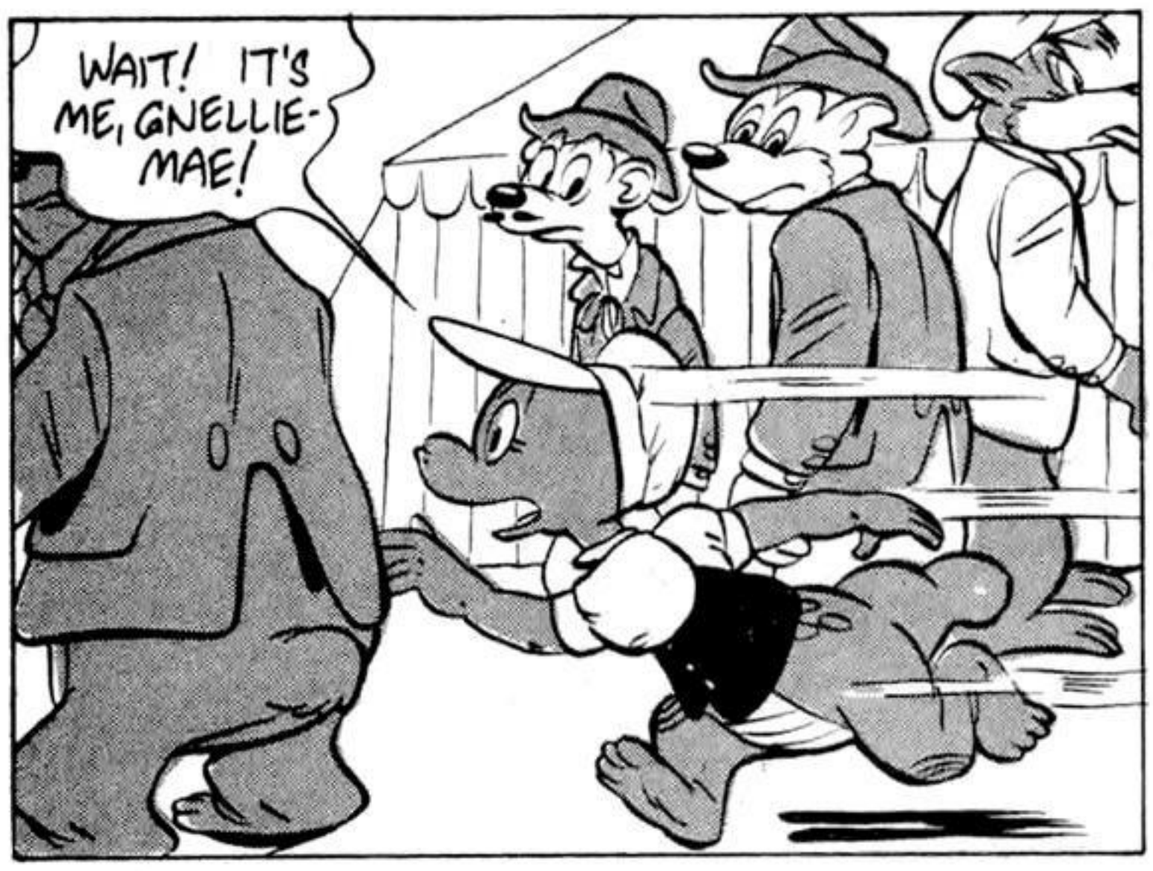
...I SAMPLED ALL OF THE AMUSEMENTS AND STUFFED MYSELF WITH SWEET DISHES...

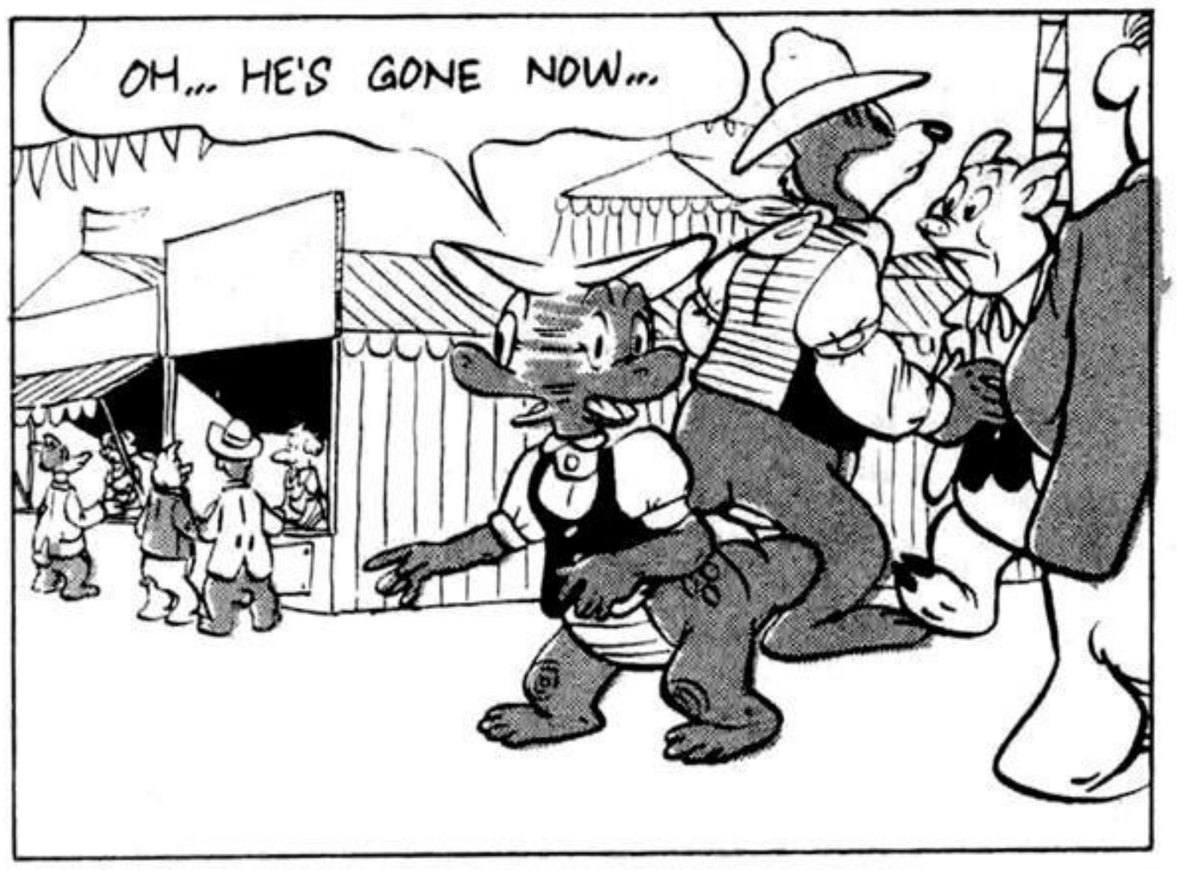


SUDDENLY I REALIZED I HAD SEEN SOMEONE I KNEW FROM THE BACK...

HUBERT WAS THE FELLOW I HAD LOVED BUT HAD LOST TOUCH WITH...

THAT WAS MAINLY BECAUSE OLD GULLIVER GNUFF, WHO I LIVED WITH, COULDN'T STAND THE O'GATOR FAMILY...


WAIT! IT'S ME, GNELLIE-MAE!

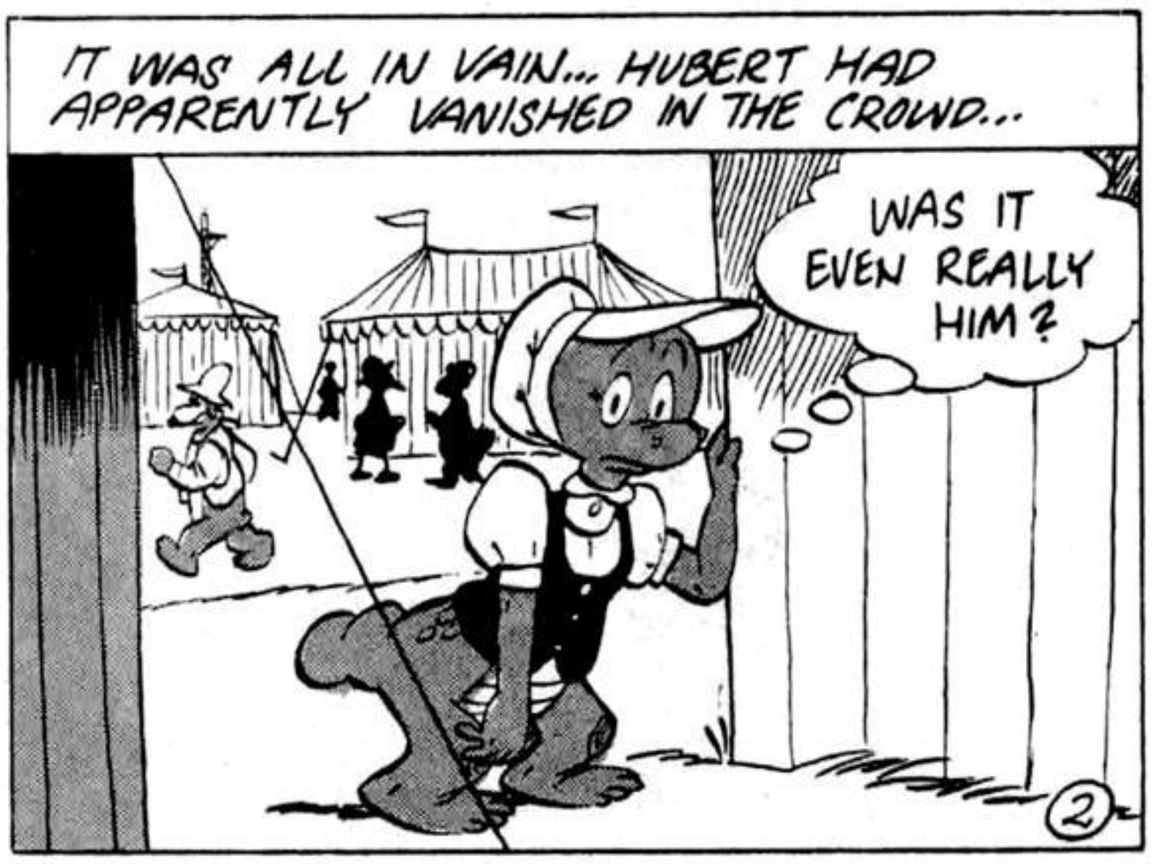

OH... HE'S GONE NOW...

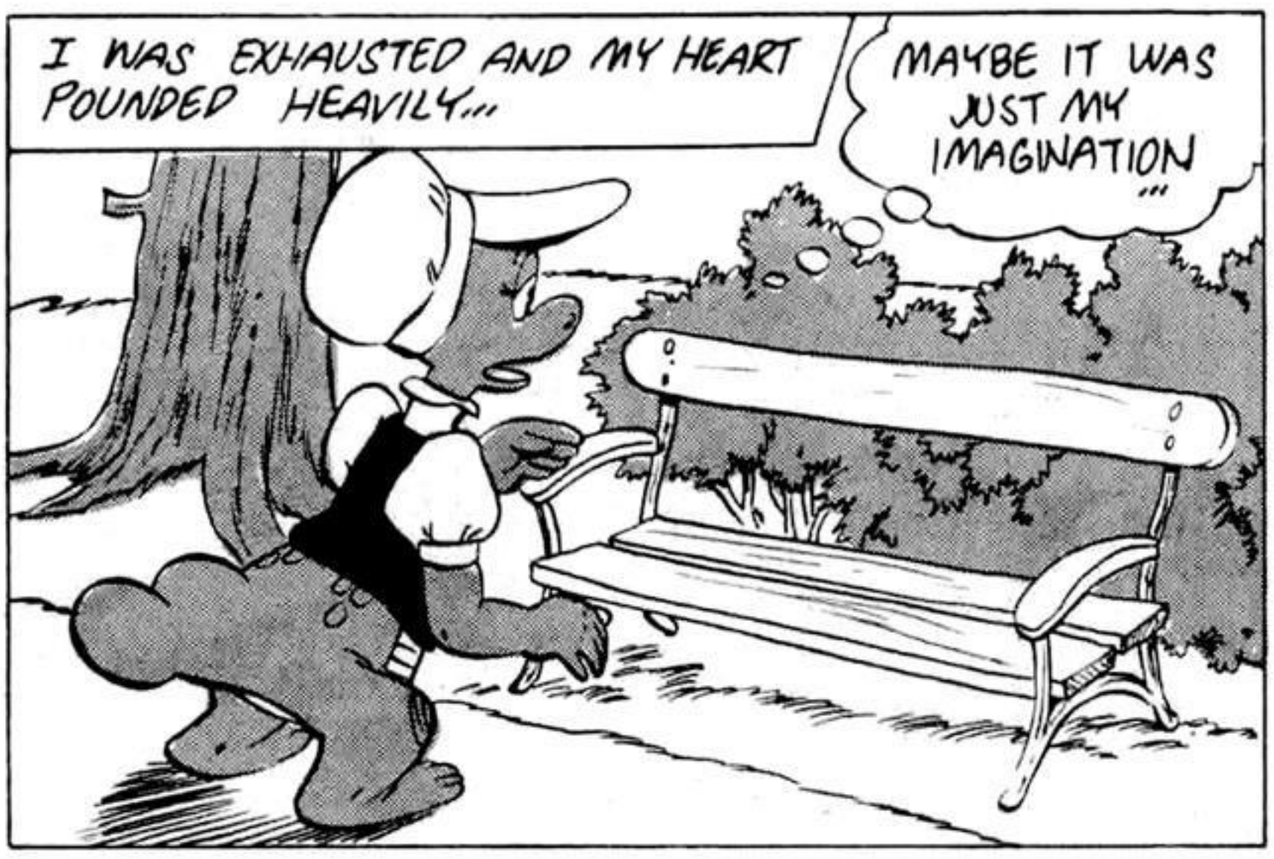
I BEGAN TO SYSTEMATICALLY SEARCH THE FAIRGROUNDS... THE SHOOTING GALLERIES...
EXCUSE ME...

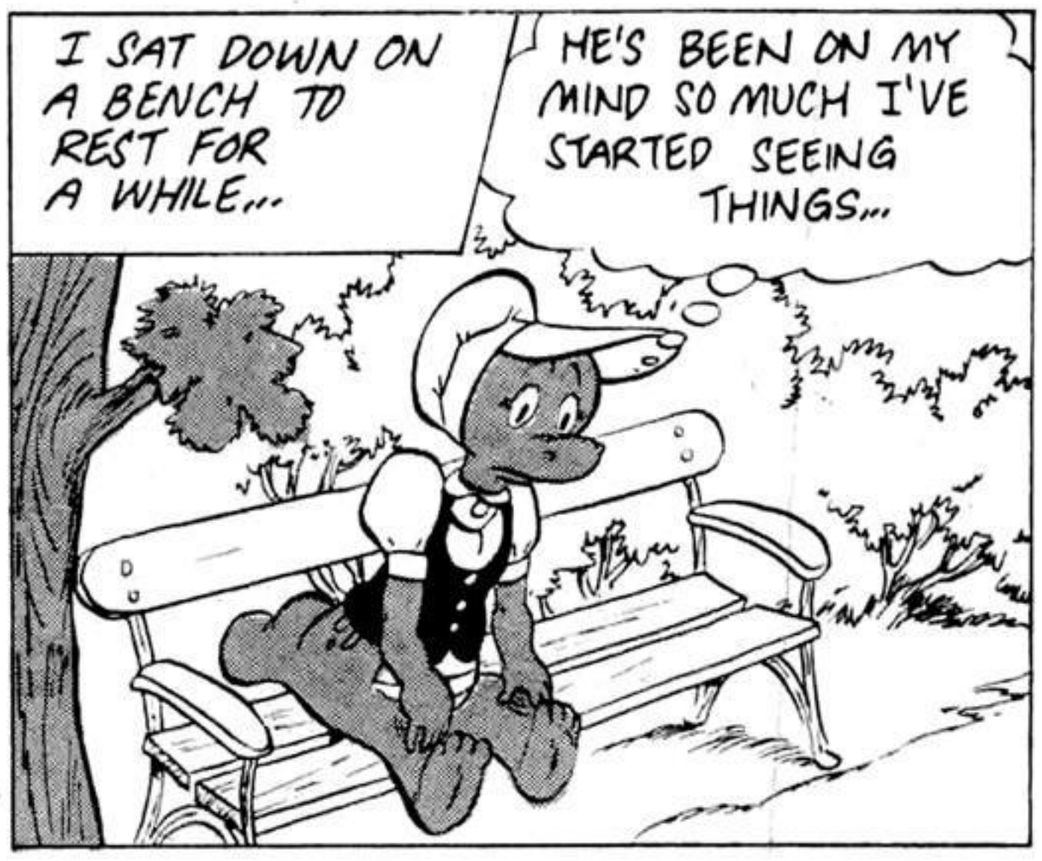
THE REFRESHMENT TENTS...
NOPE... NOT HERE, MA'AM!

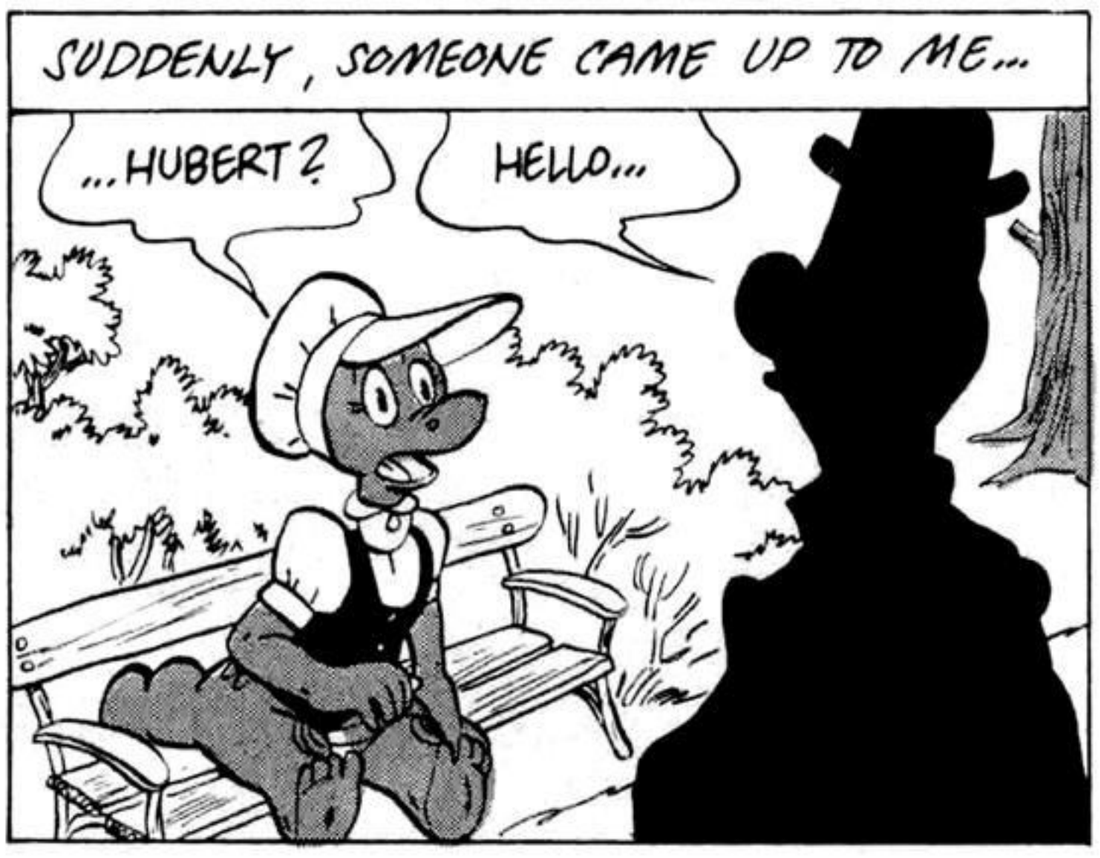
ON THE DANCEFLOOR...
GRAB YOUR PARTNER AN' SWING HER 'ROUND!

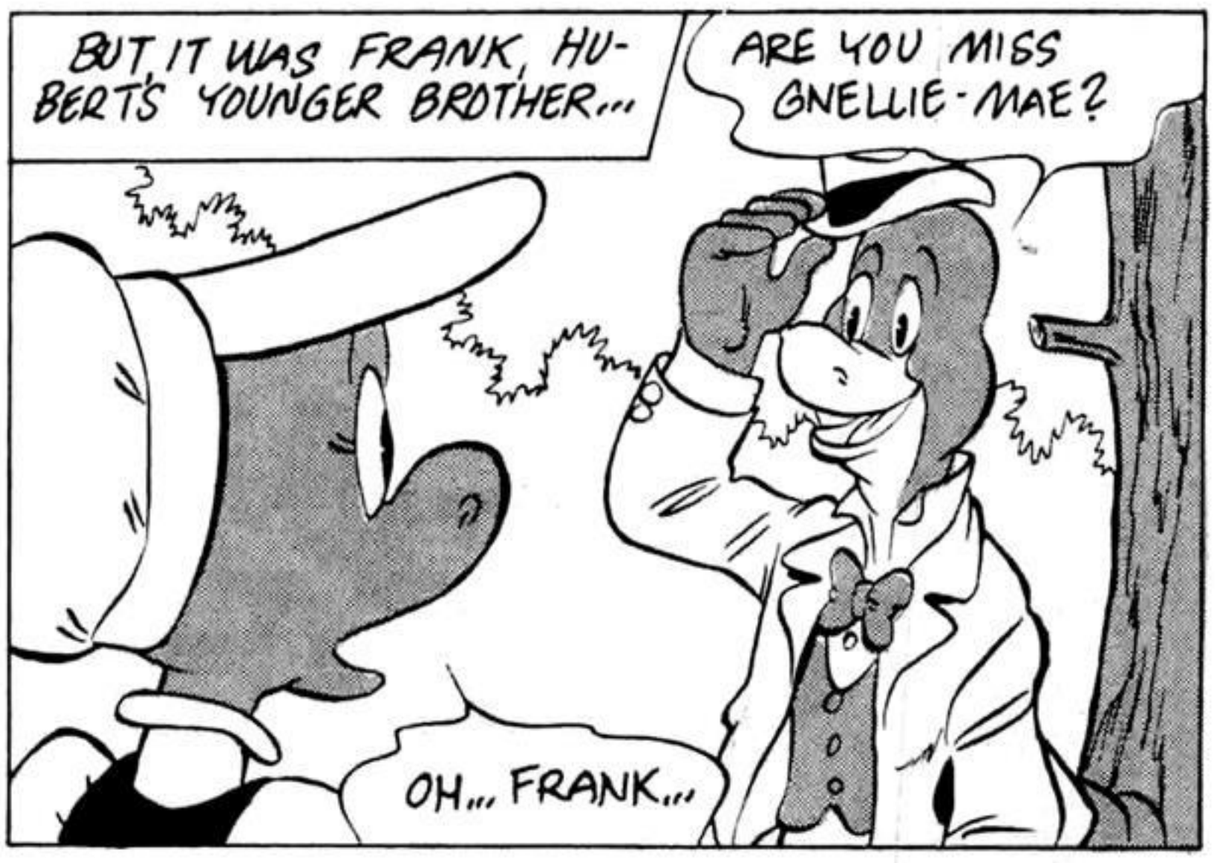
AND IN THE GAMETENTS...
HUBERT WHO?


IT WAS ALL IN VAIN... HUBERT HAD APPARENTLY VANISHED IN THE CROWD...
WAS IT EVEN REALLY HIM?

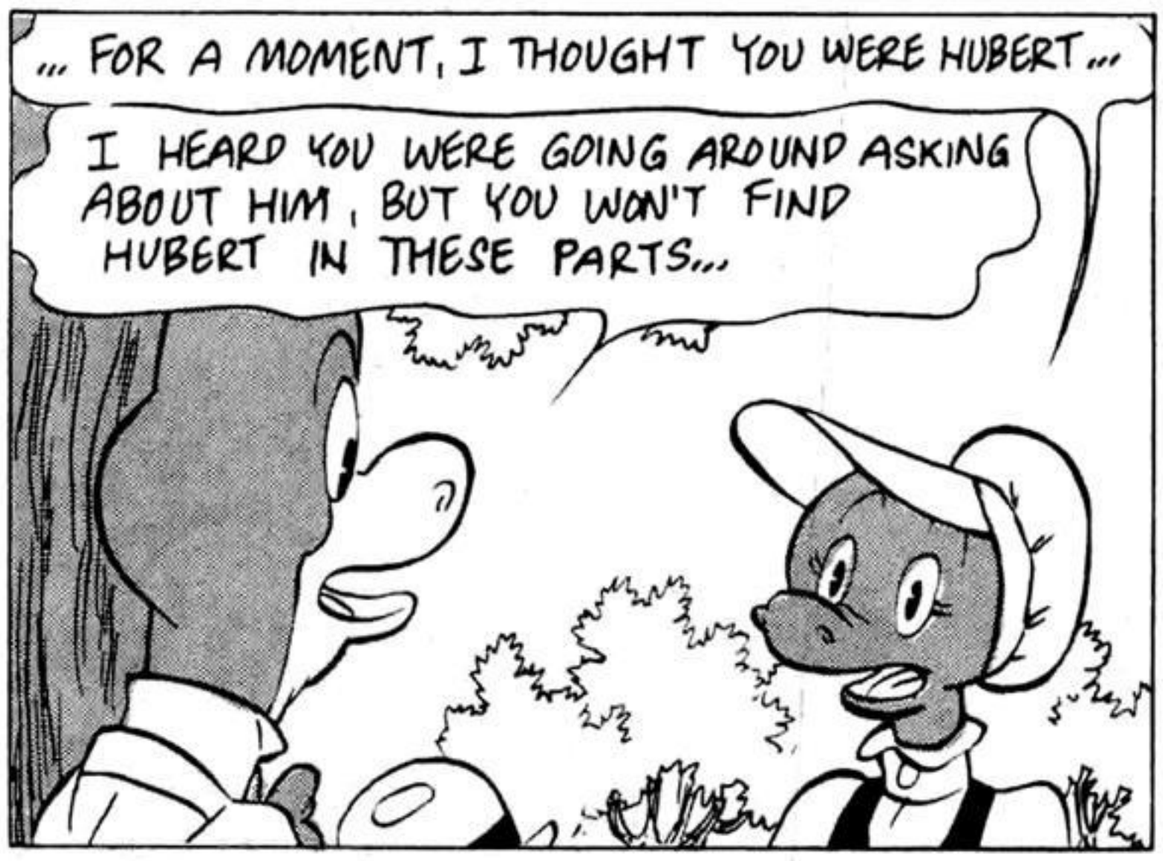

I WAS EXHAUSTED AND MY HEART POUNDED HEAVILY...
MAYBE IT WAS JUST MY IMAGINATION ...

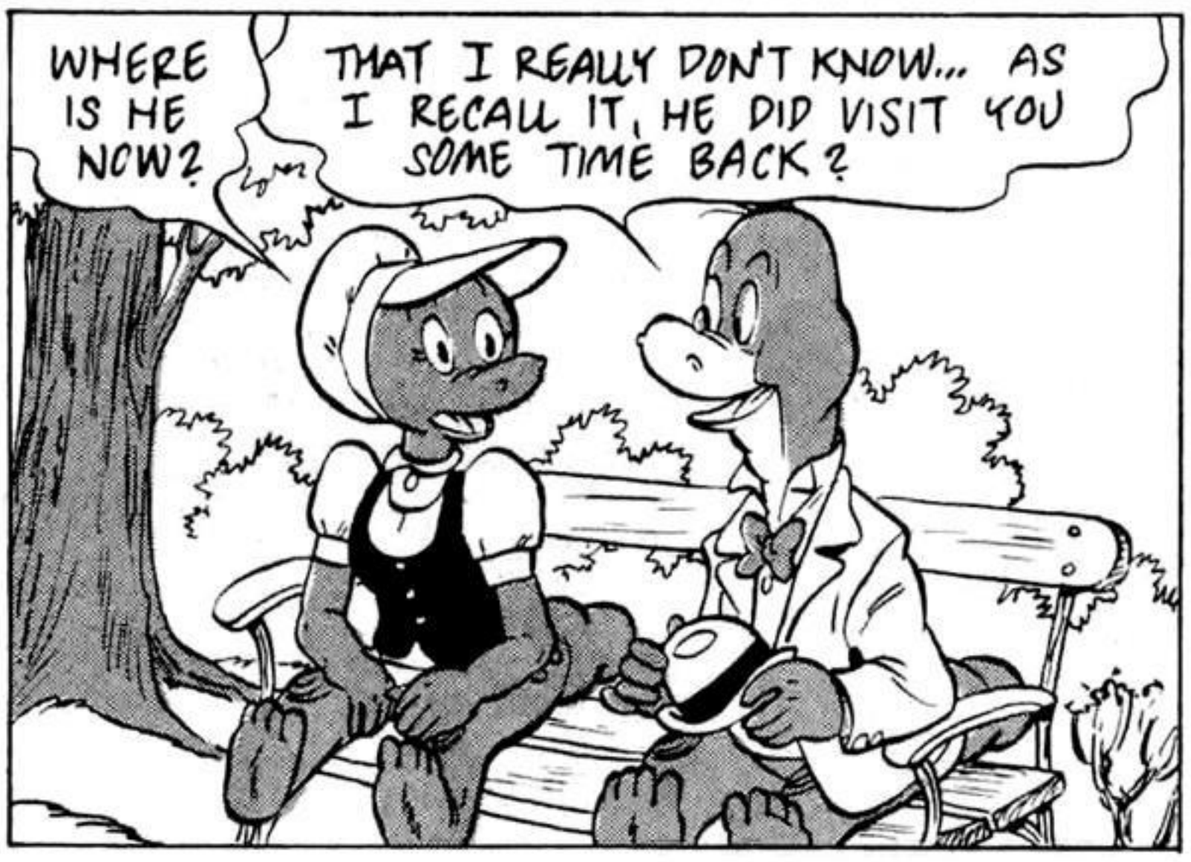

I SAT DOWN ON A BENCH TO REST FOR A WHILE...
HE'S BEEN ON MY MIND SO MUCH I'VE STARTED SEEING THINGS...

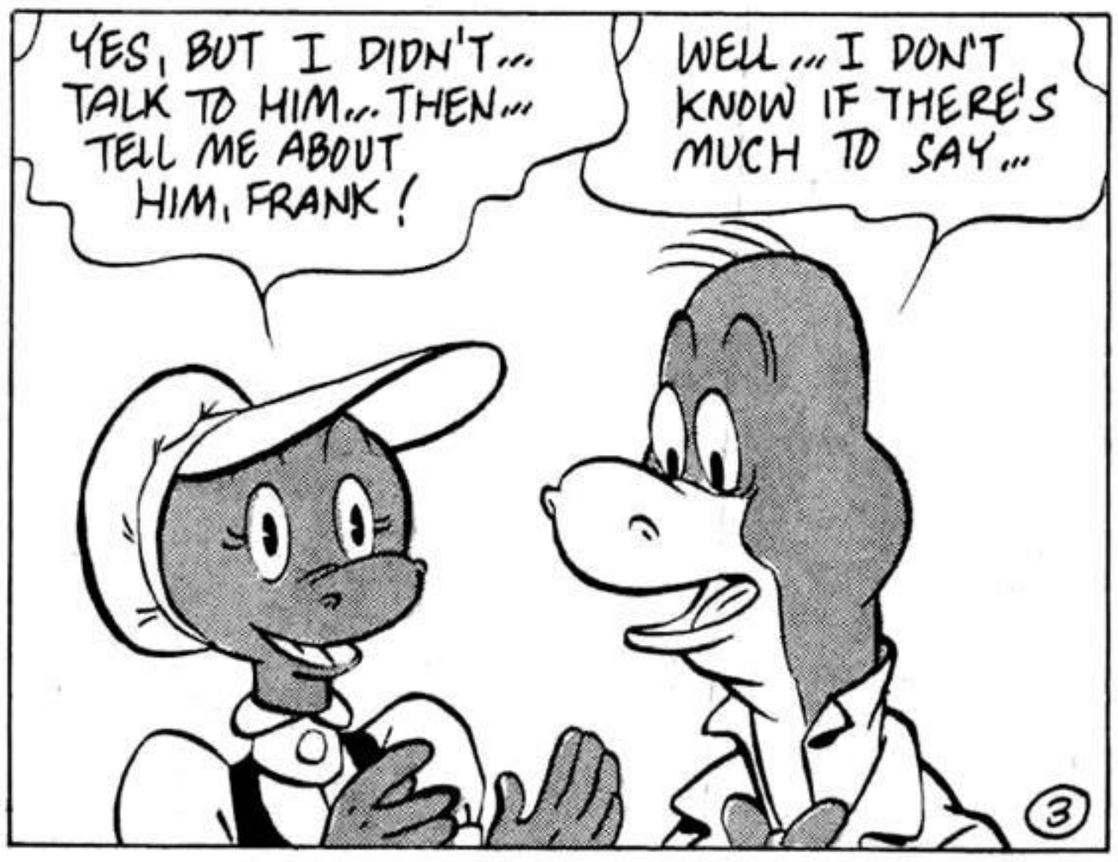

SUDDENLY, SOMEONE CAME UP TO ME...
...HUBERT?
HELLO...

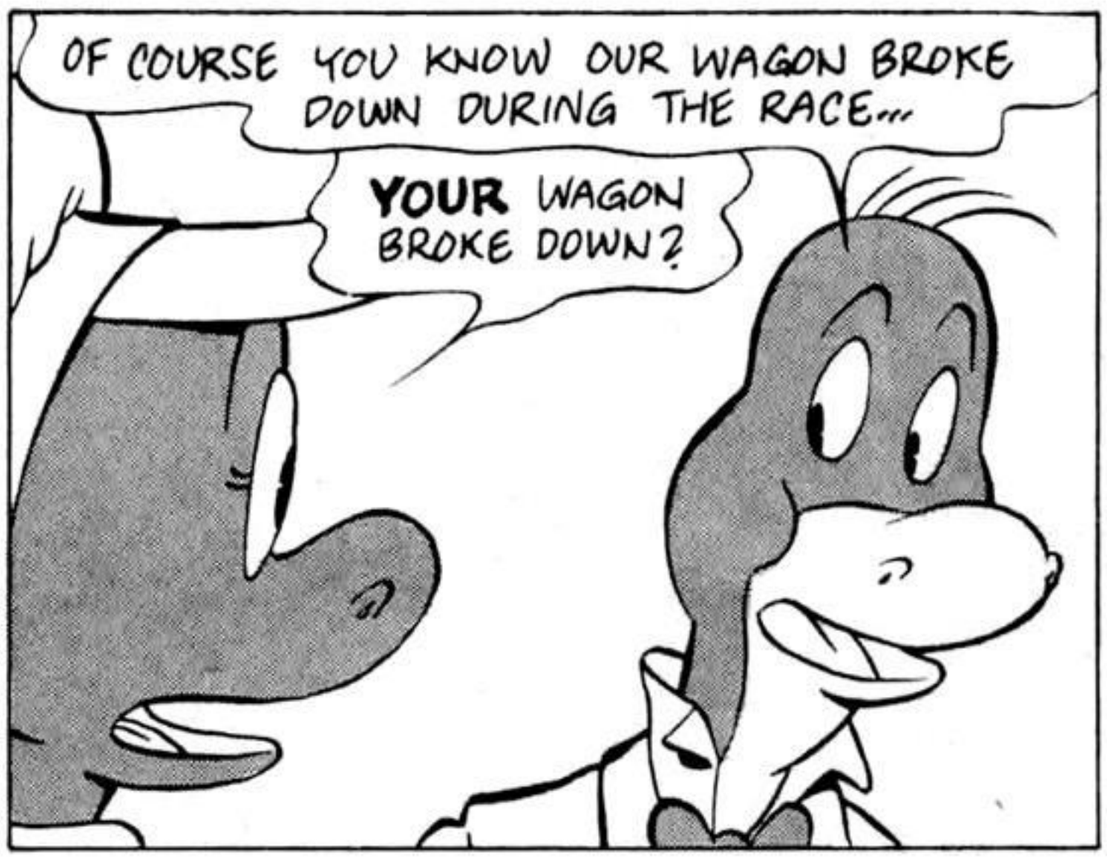

BUT IT WAS FRANK, HUBERT'S YOUNGER BROTHER...
ARE YOU MISS GNELLIE-MAE?
OH... FRANK...

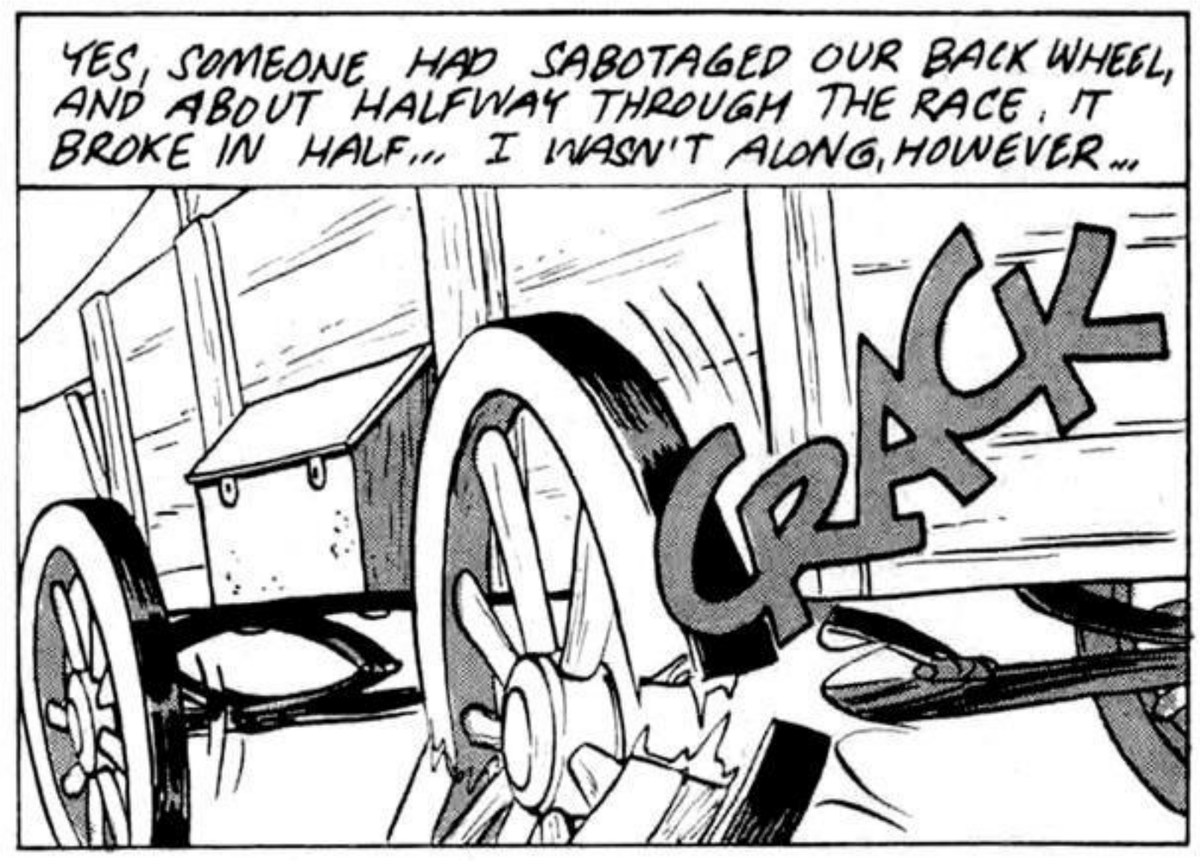
YES I AM, FRANK... I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF YOU A WHILE AGO...
SO YOU REMEMBER ME... STILL?


... FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT YOU WERE HUBERT...
I HEARD YOU WERE GOING AROUND ASKING ABOUT HIM, BUT YOU WON'T FIND HUBERT IN THESE PARTS...


WHERE IS HE NOW?
THAT I REALLY DON'T KNOW... AS I RECALL IT, HE DID VISIT YOU SOME TIME BACK?

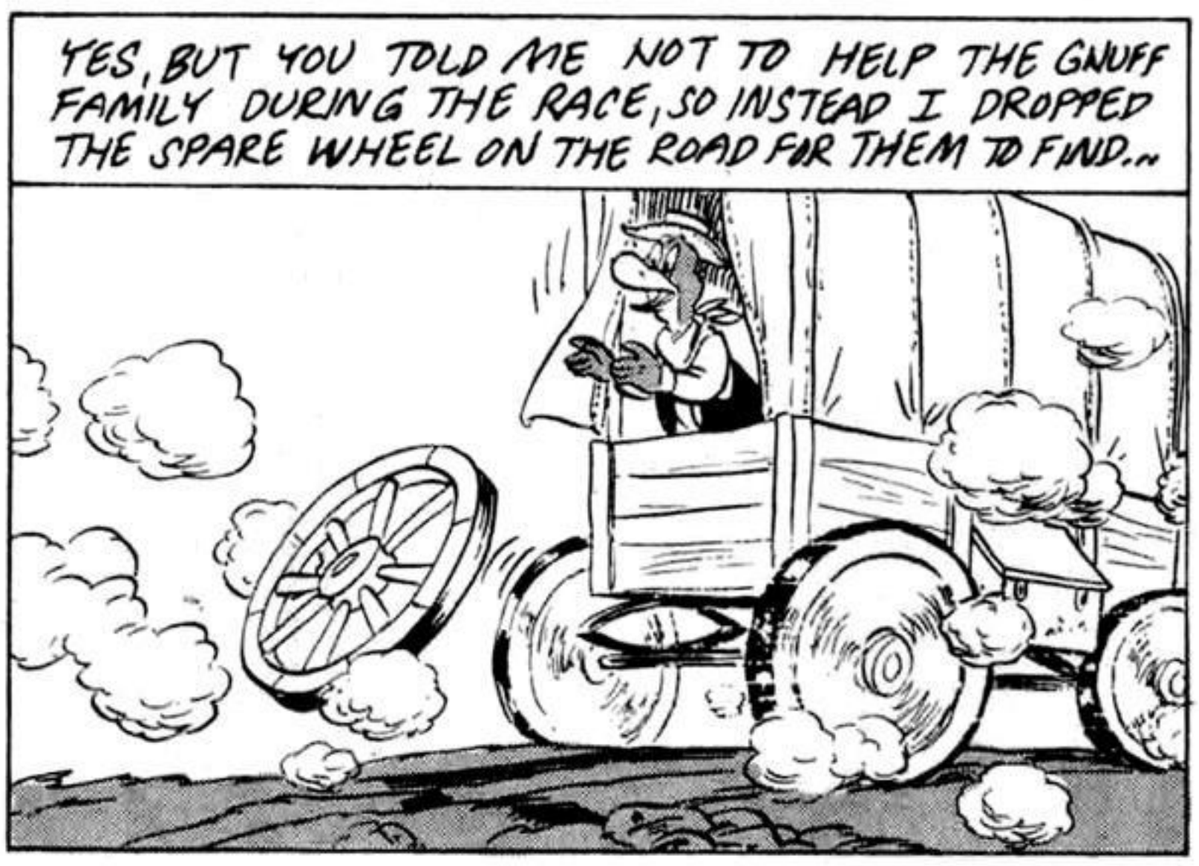

YES, BUT I DIDN'T... TALK TO HIM... THEN... TELL ME ABOUT HIM, FRANK!
WELL... I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S MUCH TO SAY...

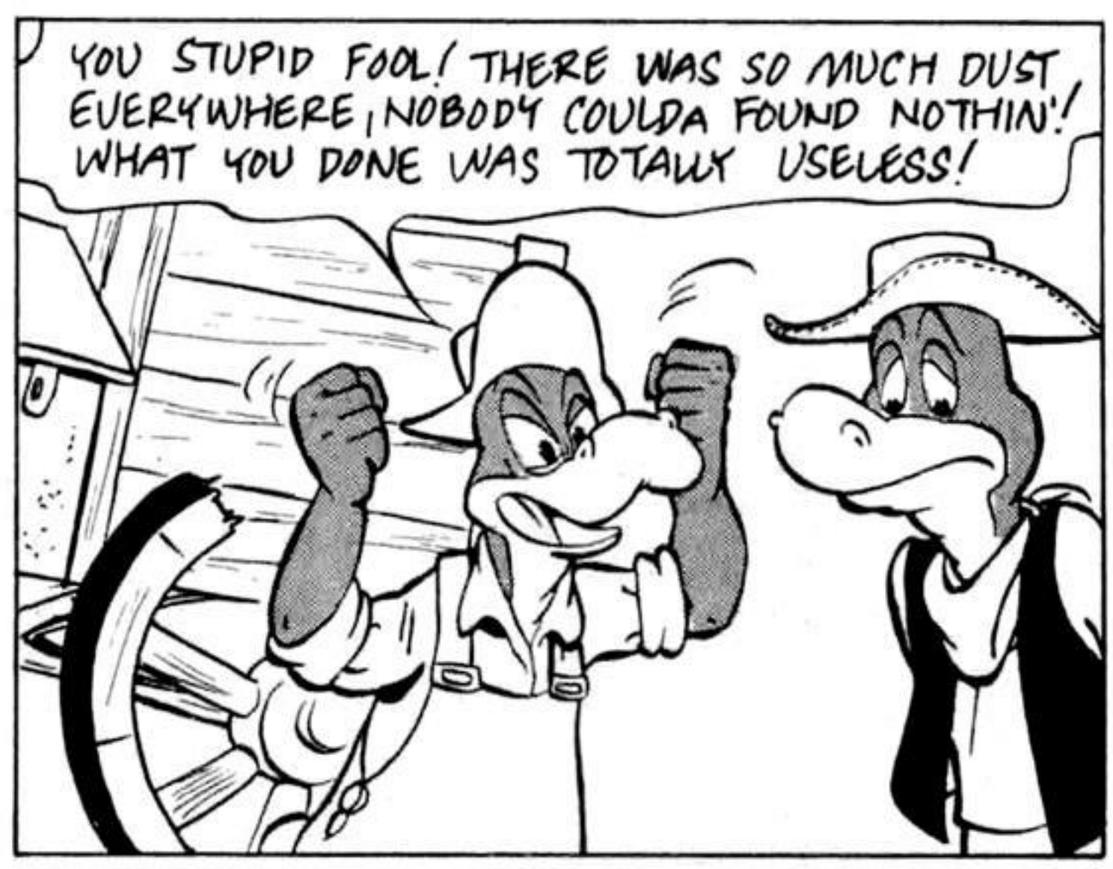

OF COURSE YOU KNOW OUR WAGON BROKE DOWN DURING THE RACE...
YOUR WAGON BROKE DOWN?


YES, SOMEONE HAD SABOTAGED OUR BACK WHEEL, AND ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH THE RACE, IT BROKE IN HALF... I WASN'T ALONG, HOWEVER...
CRACK

AIN'T THAT A PAIN... LUCKILY, WE BROUGHT A SPARE WHEEL WITH US...
...UH OH...

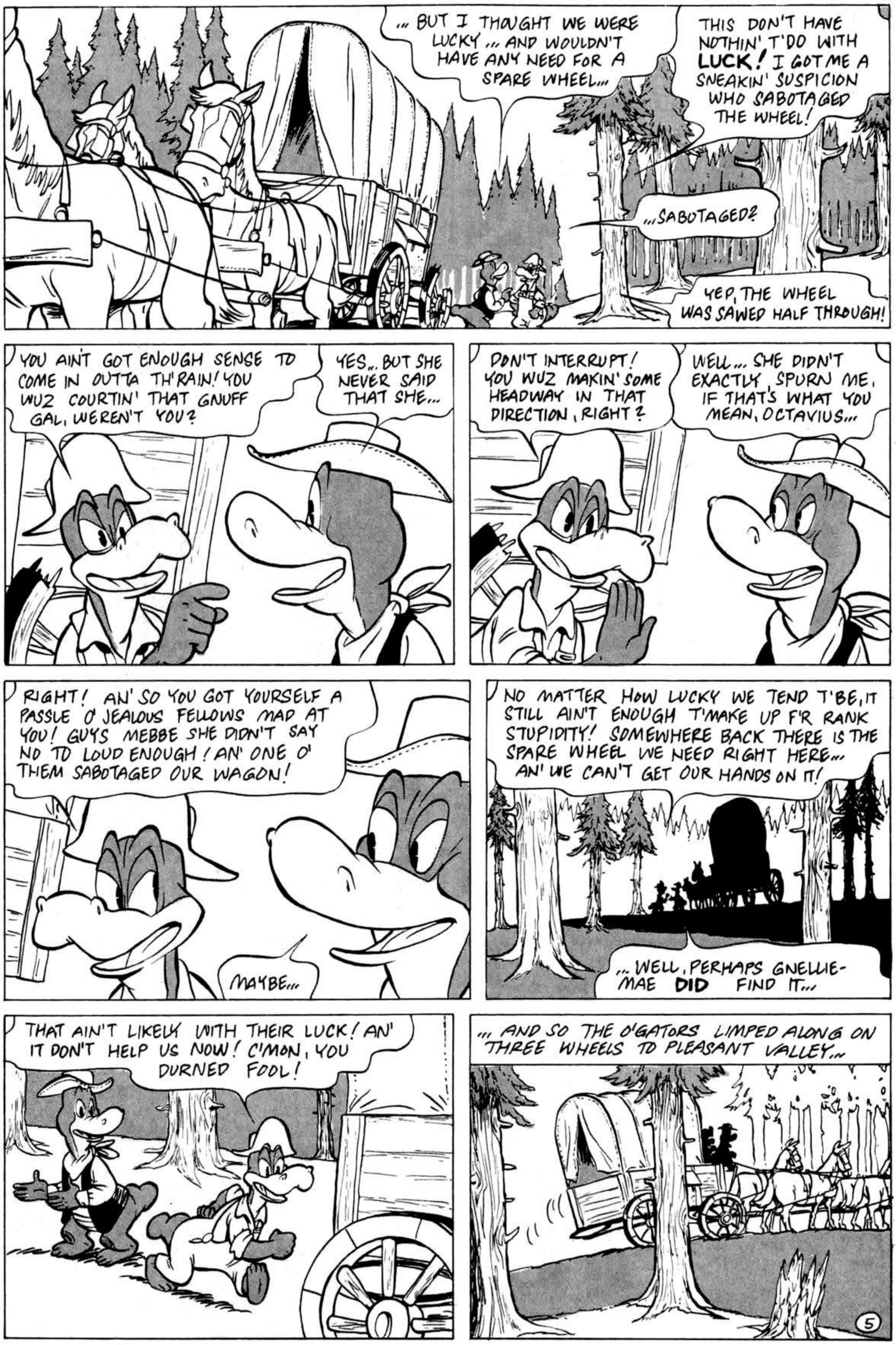
WE DON'T HAVE A SPARE WAGON WHEEL WITH US NOW, OCTAVIUS.
WHADDYA MEAN, HUBERT? I LOADED IT MYSELF!


YES, BUT YOU TOLD ME NOT TO HELP THE GNUFF FAMILY DURING THE RACE, SO INSTEAD I DROPPED THE SPARE WHEEL ON THE ROAD FOR THEM TO FIND...

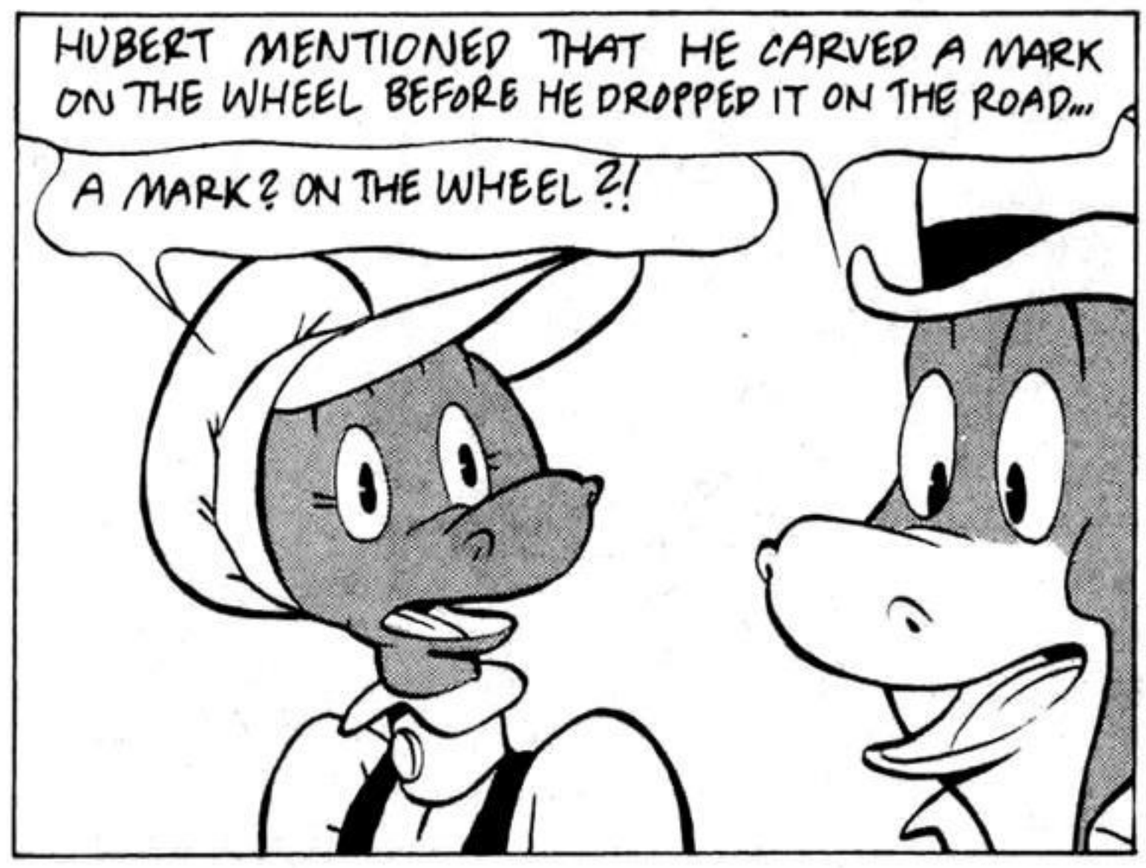

YOU STUPID FOOL! THERE WAS SO MUCH DUST EVERYWHERE, NOBODY COULDA FOUND NOTHIN'! WHAT YOU DONE WAS TOTALLY USELESS!

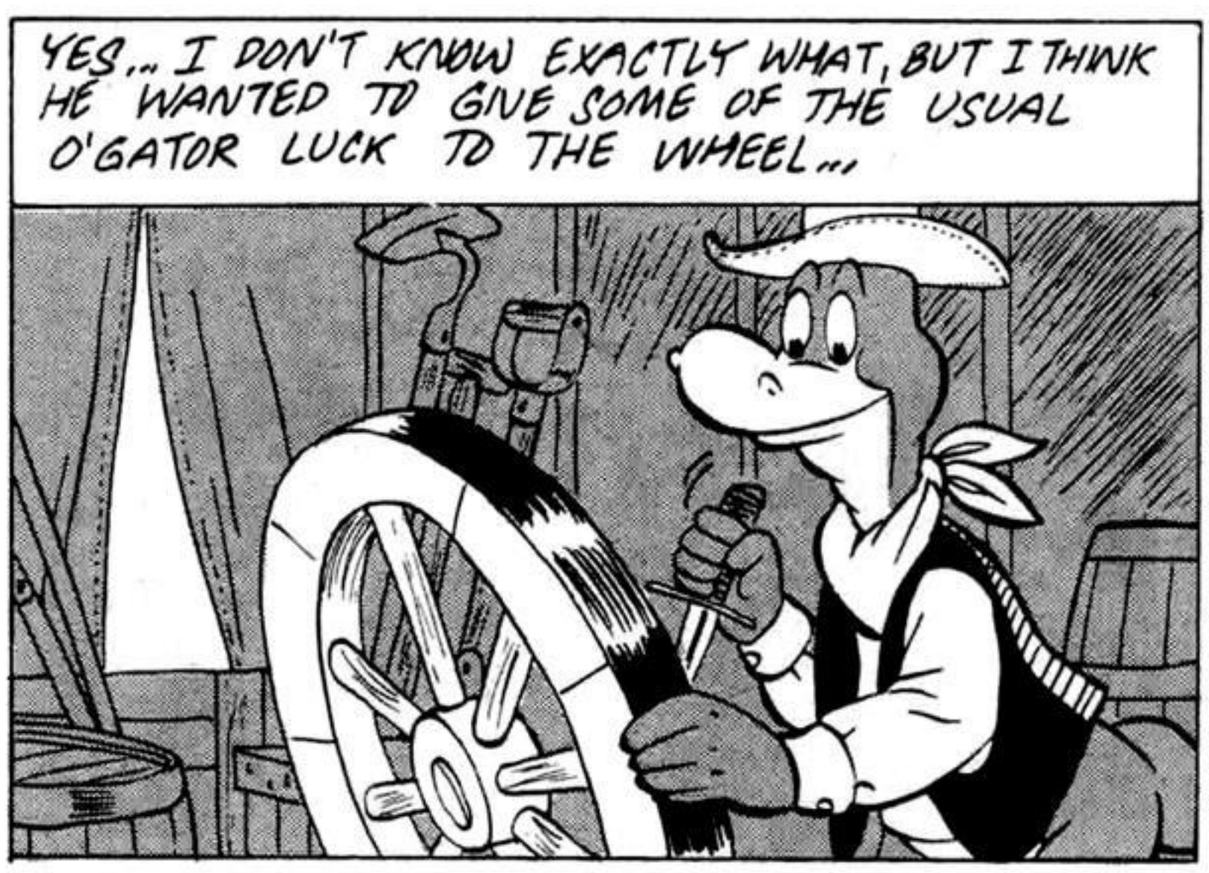
OH LORDY! ONLY A LOVESTRUCK NINNY LIKE YOU WOULD THROW OUT A SPARE WHEEL HOPIN' HIS LADY-LOVE'D FIND IT IN SPITE O' EVERYTHIN'! IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE ME SICK!

I SWEAR! YOU GOT ANY IDEA HOW DAD-BLAMED IRRESPONSIBLE WHAT YOU DONE WAS?!! DO YOU?!!
YES! YES! YES!

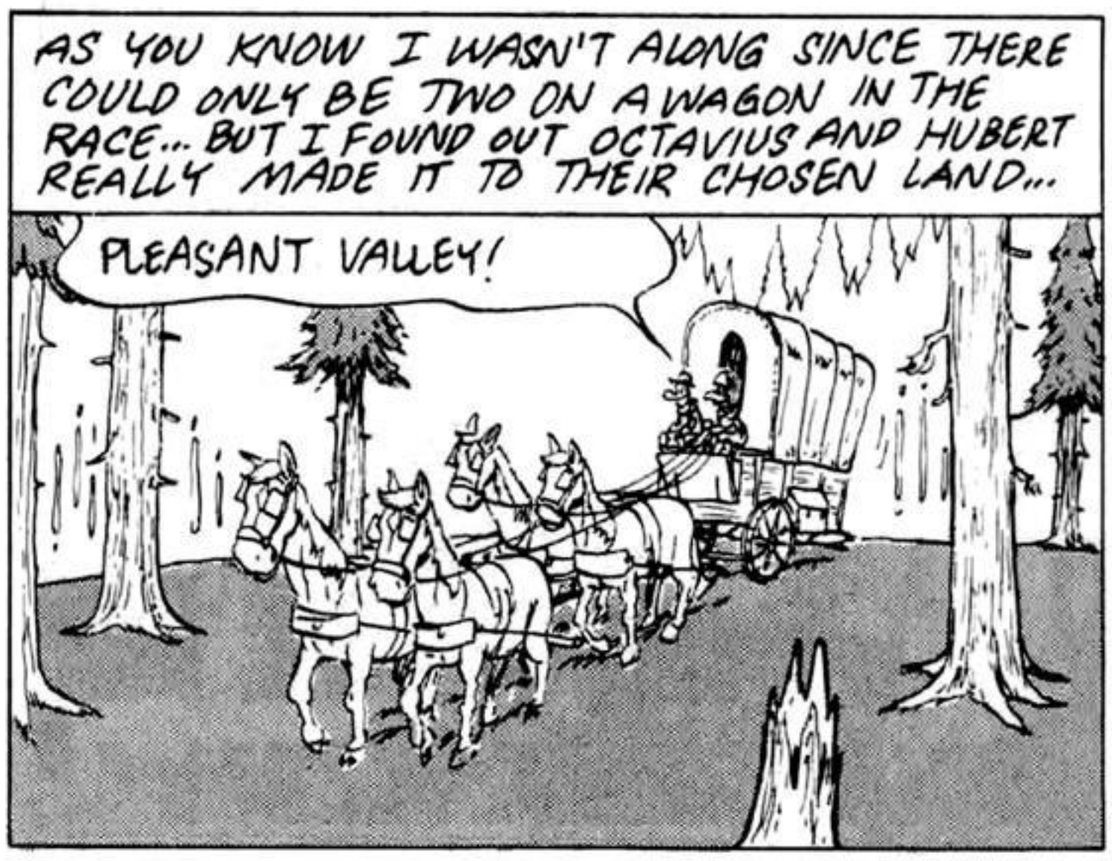

... BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE LUCKY ... AND WOULDN'T HAVE ANY NEED FOR A SPARE WHEEL...
THIS DON'T HAVE NOTHIN' T'DO WITH LUCK! I GOT ME A SNEAKIN' SUSPICION WHO SABOTAGED THE WHEEL!
...SABOTAGED?
YEP, THE WHEEL WAS SAWED HALF THROUGH!
YOU AIN'T GOT ENOUGH SENSE TO COME IN OUTTA TH'RAIN! YOU WUZ COURTIN' THAT GNUFF GAL, WEREN'T YOU?
YES... BUT SHE NEVER SAID THAT SHE...
DON'T INTERRUPT! YOU WUZ MAKIN' SOME HEADWAY IN THAT DIRECTION, RIGHT?
WELL... SHE DIDN'T EXACTLY SPURN ME, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN, OCTAVIUS...
RIGHT! AN' SO YOU GOT YOURSELF A PASSLE O' JEALOUS FELLOWS MAD AT YOU! GUYS MEBBE SHE DIDN'T SAY NO TO LOUD ENOUGH! AN' ONE O' THEM SABOTAGED OUR WAGON!
MAYBE...
NO MATTER HOW LUCKY WE TEND T'BE, IT STILL AIN'T ENOUGH T'MAKE UP F'R RANK STUPIDITY! SOMEWHERE BACK THERE IS THE SPARE WHEEL WE NEED RIGHT HERE... AN' WE CAN'T GET OUR HANDS ON IT!
... WELL, PERHAPS GNELLIE-MAE DID FIND IT...
THAT AIN'T LIKELY WITH THEIR LUCK! AN' IT DON'T HELP US NOW! C'MON, YOU DURNED FOOL!
... AND SO THE O'GATORS LIMPED ALONG ON THREE WHEELS TO PLEASANT VALLEY...

WE REALLY DID FIND A WHEEL ALONG THE WAY WHEN OURS BROKE, SO PERHAPS IT WAS YOURS?
IF SO, IT WOULDN'T BE HARD TO FIND OUT!


HUBERT MENTIONED THAT HE CARVED A MARK ON THE WHEEL BEFORE HE DROPPED IT ON THE ROAD...
A MARK? ON THE WHEEL?!

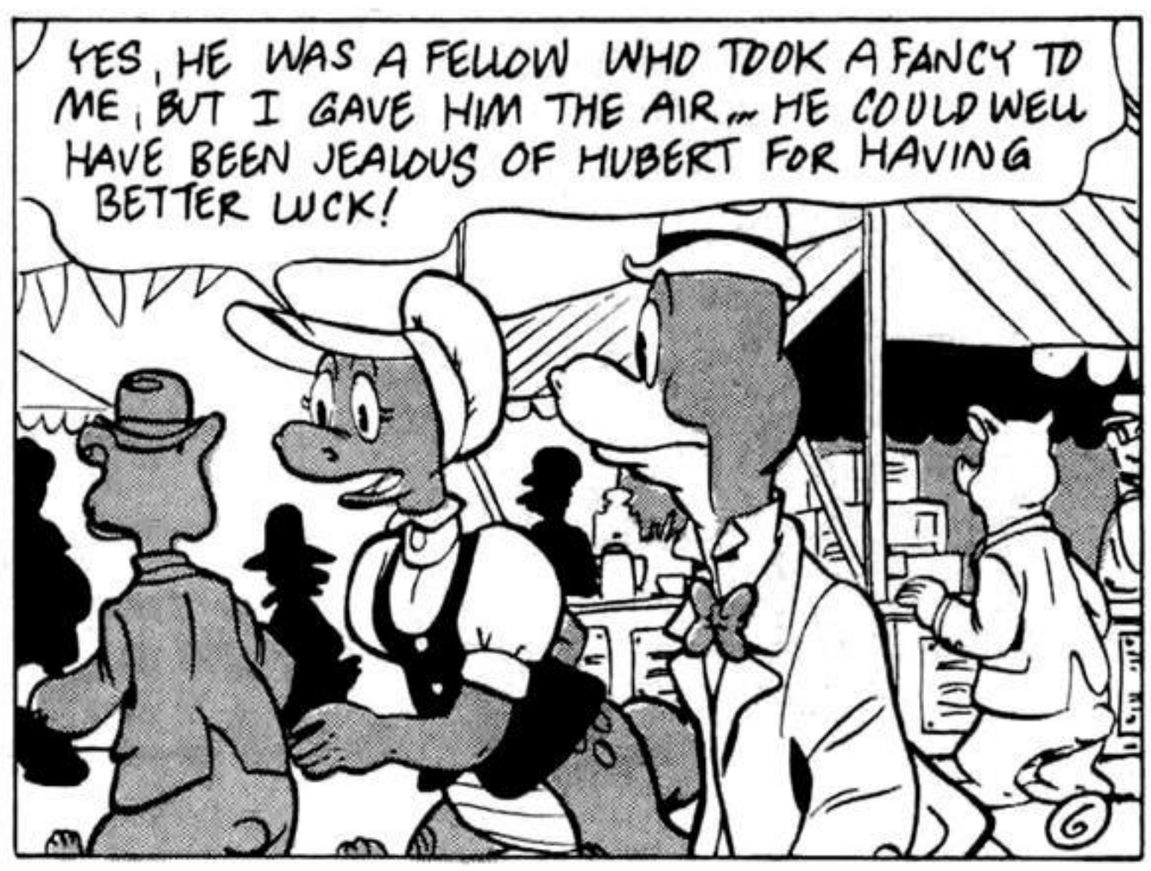

YES... I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT, BUT I THINK HE WANTED TO GIVE SOME OF THE USUAL O'GATOR LUCK TO THE WHEEL...

...AND IF YOU ACTUALLY FOUND THE WHEEL IN THE DUSTY WAGON TRACKS, I'D HAVE TO SAY IT WORKED!
I'LL SAY! THEN WHAT HAPPENED??


AS YOU KNOW I WASN'T ALONG SINCE THERE COULD ONLY BE TWO ON A WAGON IN THE RACE... BUT I FOUND OUT OCTAVIUS AND HUBERT REALLY MADE IT TO THEIR CHOSEN LAND...
PLEASANT VALLEY!

BUT THE BROKEN BACK WHEEL SLOWED THEM UP SO MUCH THAT SOMEONE ELSE GOT THERE FIRST...
HARRY HANCOCK!

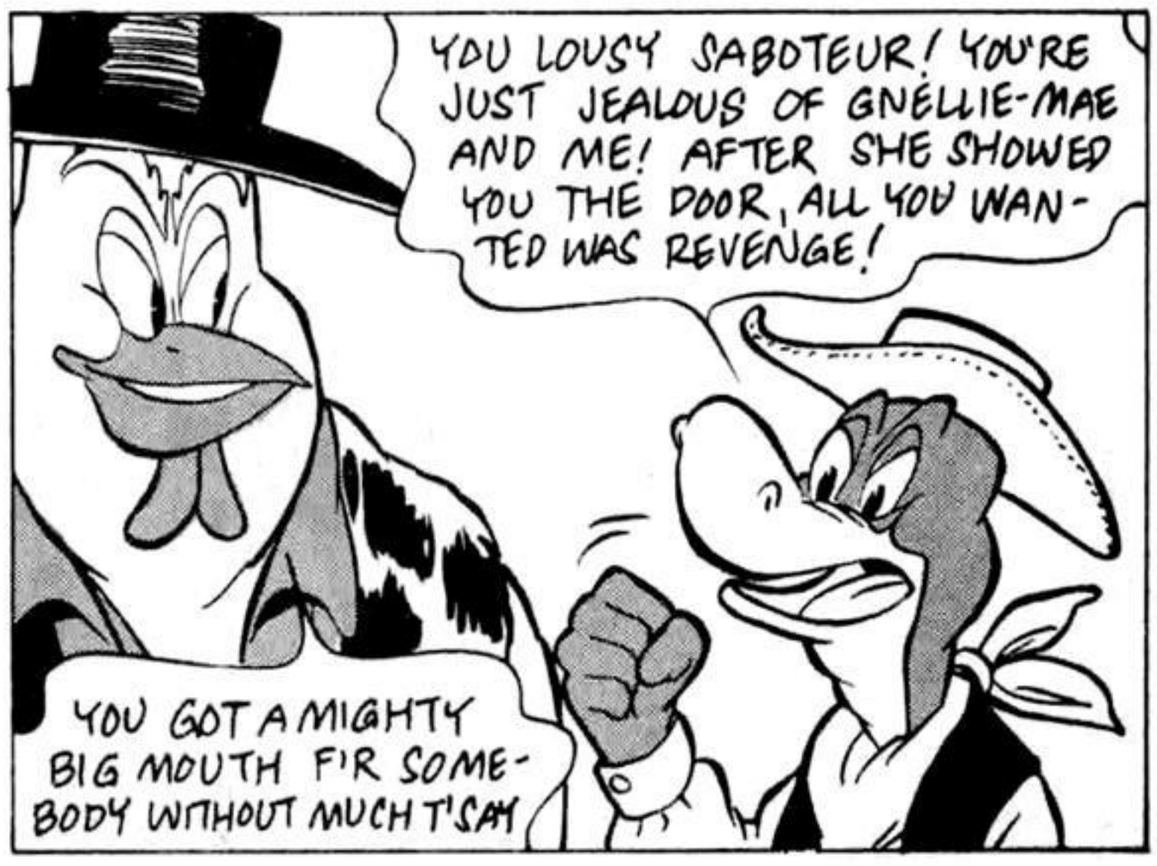
OH NO! NOT HIM!
YOU KNOW HIM?


YES, HE WAS A FELLOW WHO TOOK A FANCY TO ME, BUT I GAVE HIM THE AIR... HE COULD WELL HAVE BEEN JEALOUS OF HUBERT FOR HAVING BETTER LUCK!

VERY TRUE! HE CAME UP TO THEM AND HUBERT RECOGNIZED HIM...
I SAW YOU AT THE RACE OFFICE!
YEAH, AN' YOU WERE THERE WITH GNELLIE-MAE!

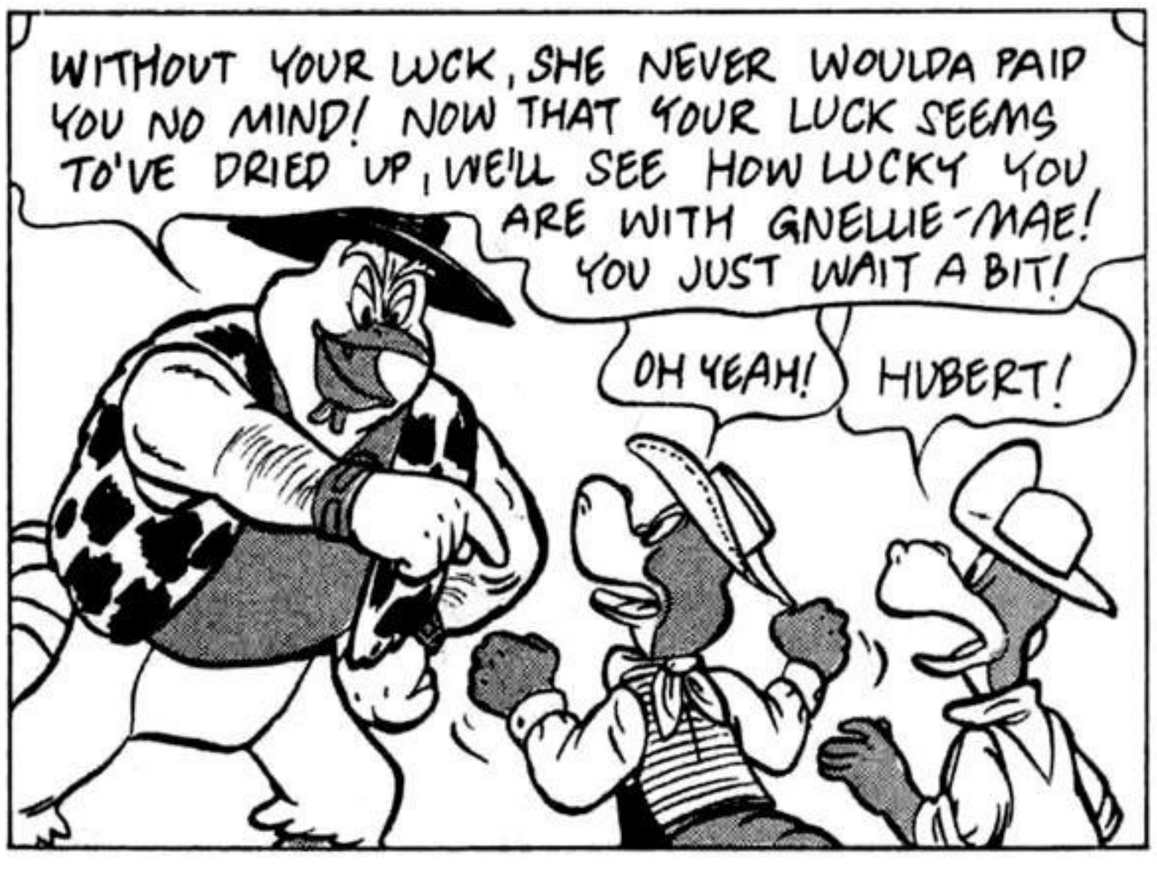
SO YOU KNEW WE HAD OUR EYE ON THIS PLACE?
YEP! AN' I GOT ME A YEN F'R THIS LAND M'SELF!

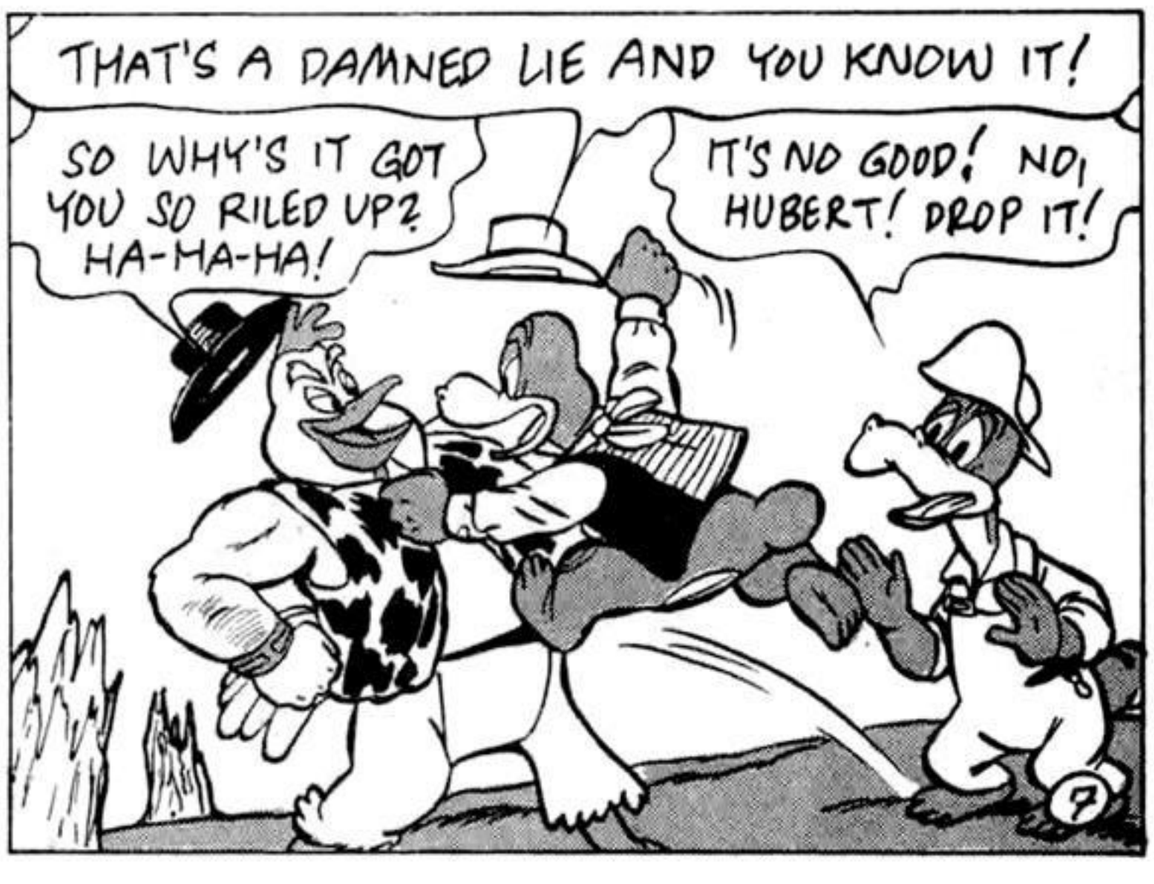
SINCE I GOT THERE TOO LATE T'GET THE GNUFFS' PLOT, I RECKONED I'D TRY F'R THIS'N! BUT I THOUGHT YOU O'GATORS'D BE A LOT LUCKIER!

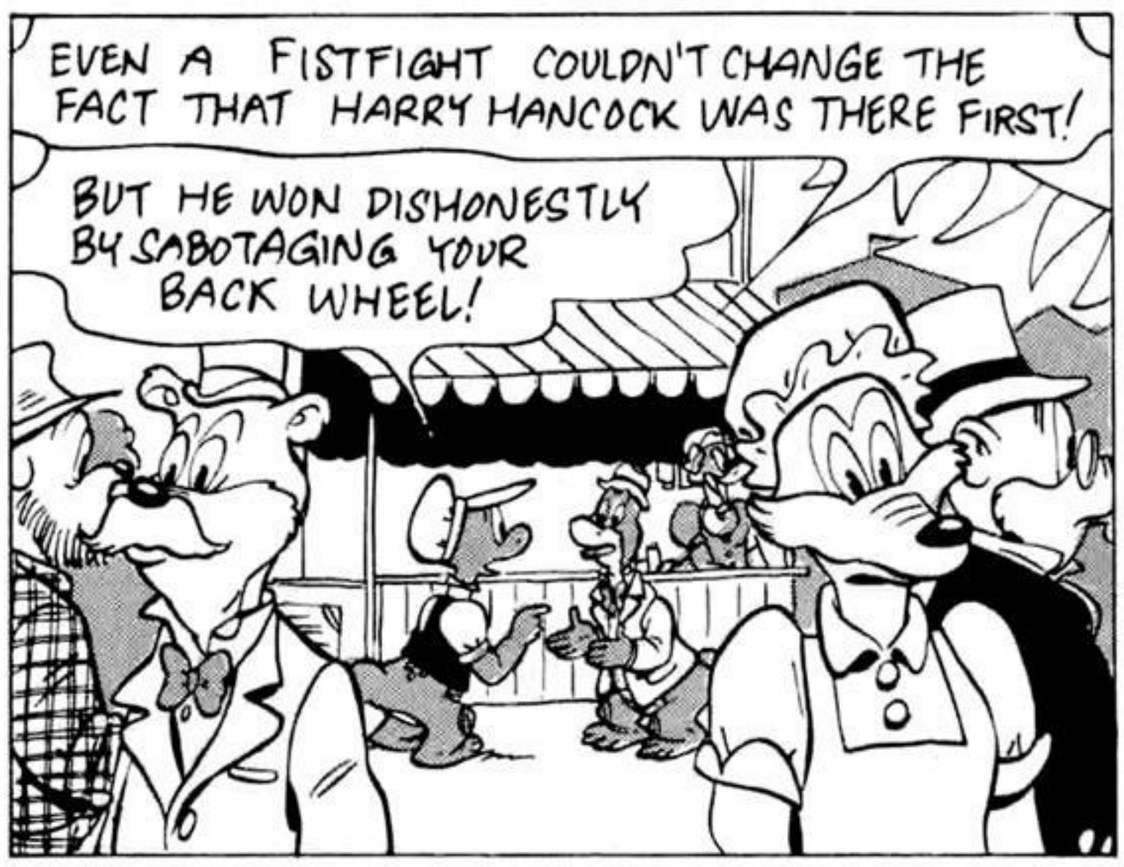

YOU LOUSY SABOTEUR! YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS OF GNELLIE-MAE AND ME! AFTER SHE SHOWED YOU THE DOOR, ALL YOU WANTED WAS REVENGE!
YOU GOT A MIGHTY BIG MOUTH F'R SOMEBODY WITHOUT MUCH T'SAY

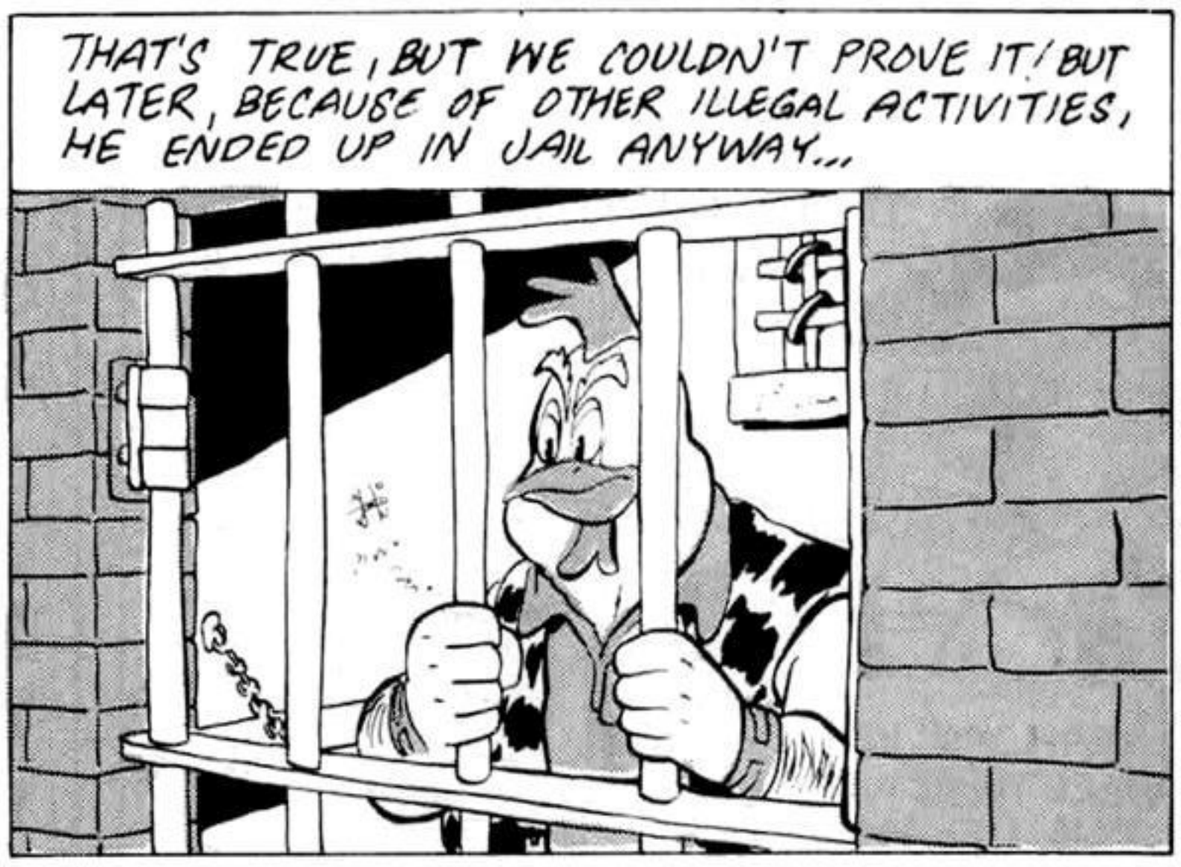
WE ALL GOTTA PLAY THE CARDS WE'RE DEALT... AN' WHEN I SET UP A FINE LI'L FARM ON THIS FERTILE LAND, GNELLIE-MAE'LL BE MORE FORGIVIN'!

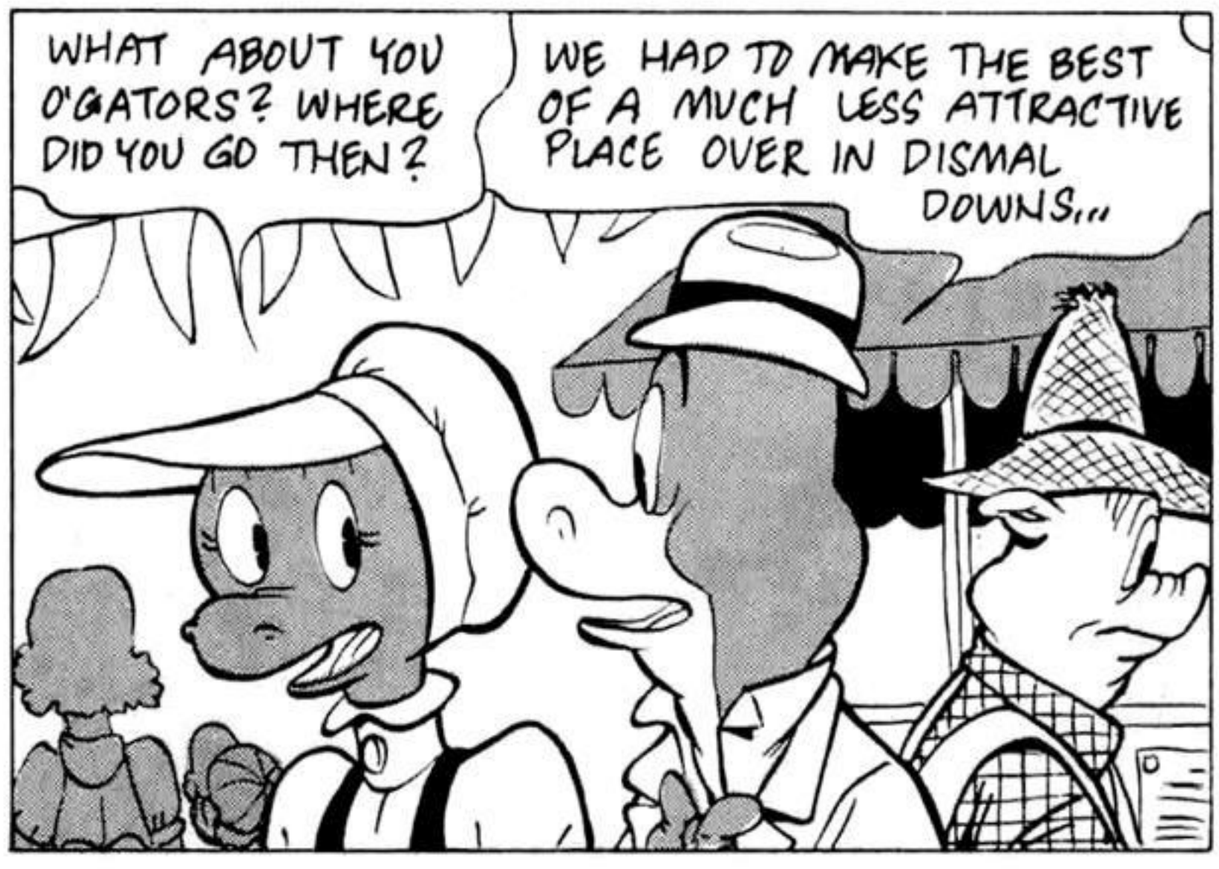
NEVER!! GNELLIE-MAE WOULD NEVER GO FOR YOU, YOU CROOK, NO MATTER HOW RICH AND PROSPEROUS YOU MIGHT GET!
WE'LL SEE! WHEN THE EXCITEMENT DIES DOWN, WOMEN GET RIGHT REASONABLE!

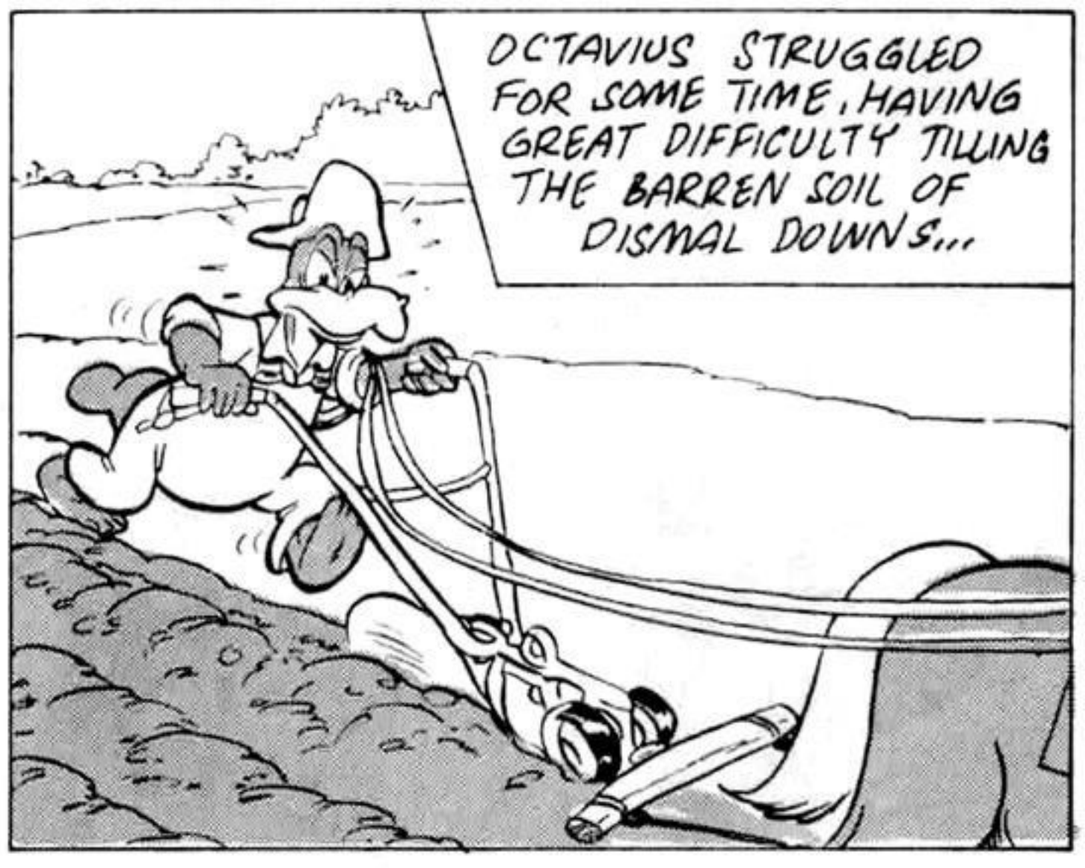

WITHOUT YOUR LUCK, SHE NEVER WOULDA PAID YOU NO MIND! NOW THAT YOUR LUCK SEEMS TO'VE DRIED UP, WE'LL SEE HOW LUCKY YOU ARE WITH GNELLIE-MAE! YOU JUST WAIT A BIT!
OH YEAH!
HUBERT!

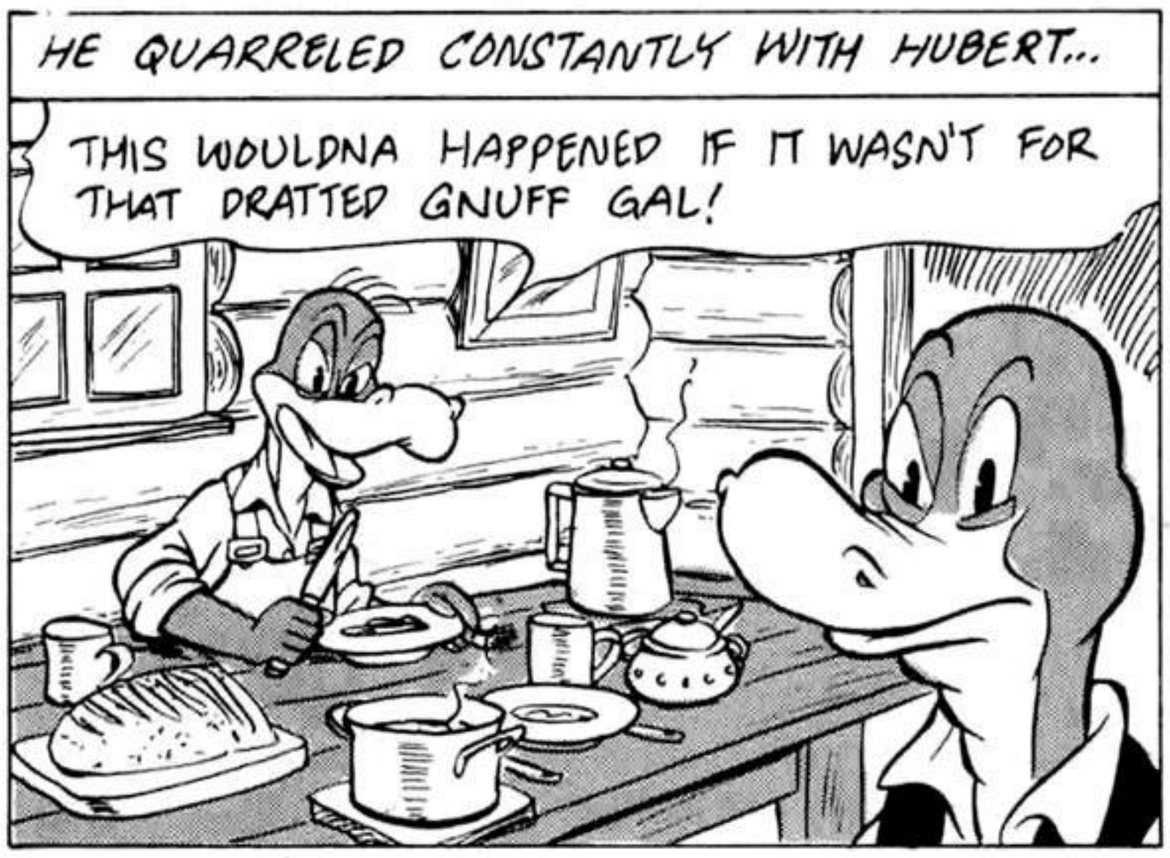

THAT'S A DAMNED LIE AND YOU KNOW IT!
SO WHY'S IT GOT YOU SO RILED UP? HA-HA-HA!
IT'S NO GOOD! NO, HUBERT! DROP IT!

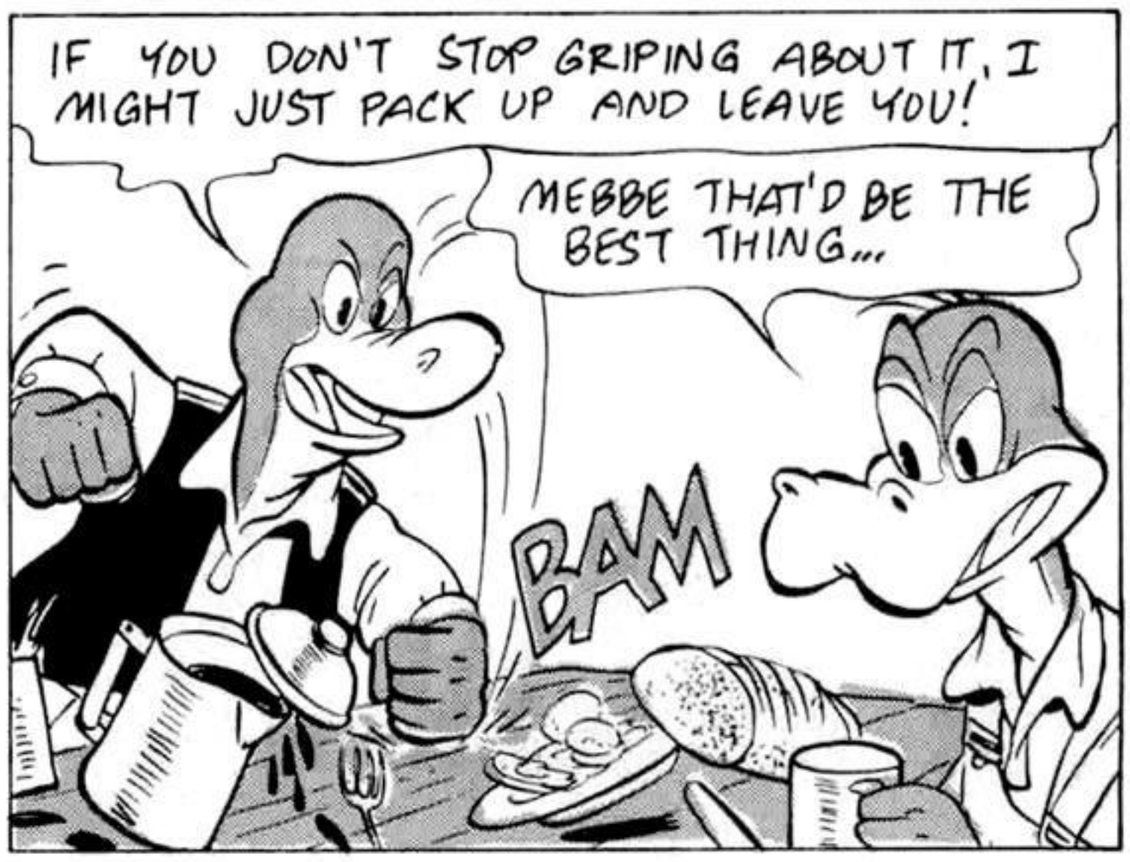

EVEN A FISTFIGHT COULDN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT HARRY HANCOCK WAS THERE FIRST!
BUT HE WON DISHONESTLY BY SABOTAGING YOUR BACK WHEEL!

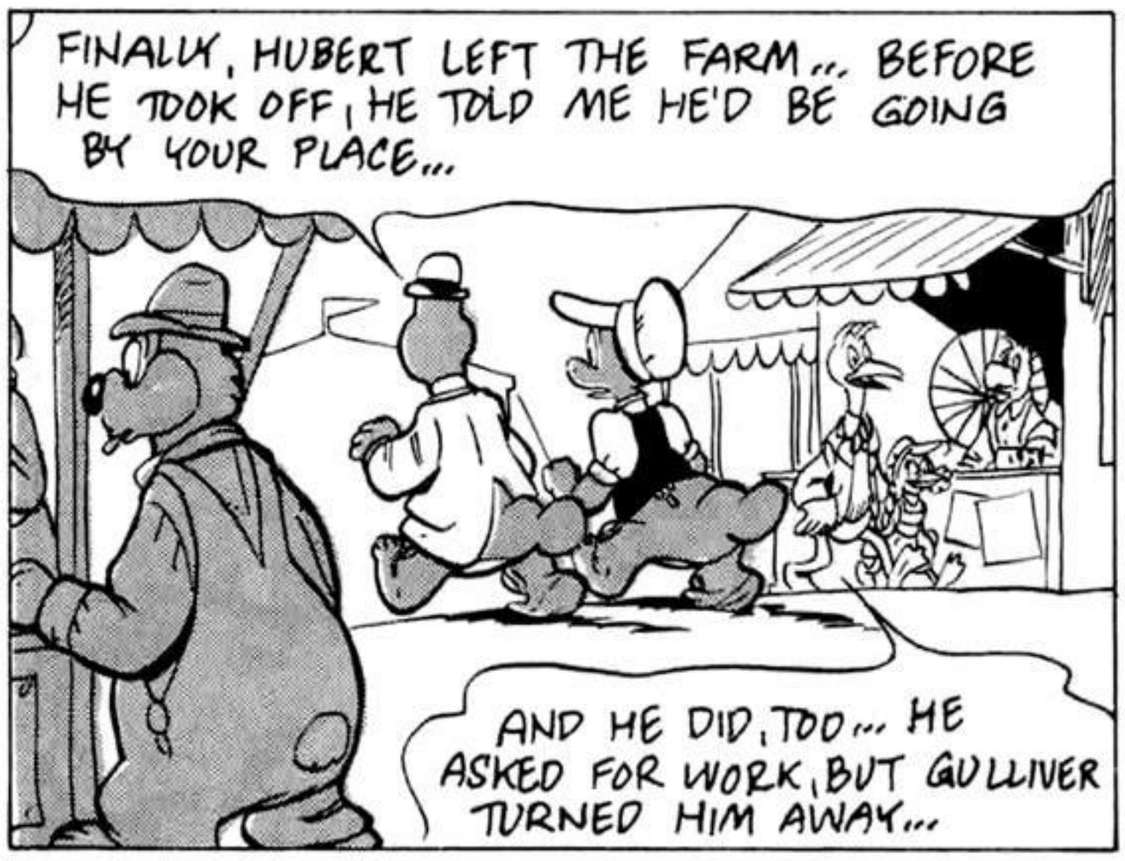

THAT'S TRUE, BUT WE COULDN'T PROVE IT! BUT LATER, BECAUSE OF OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, HE ENDED UP IN JAIL ANYWAY...

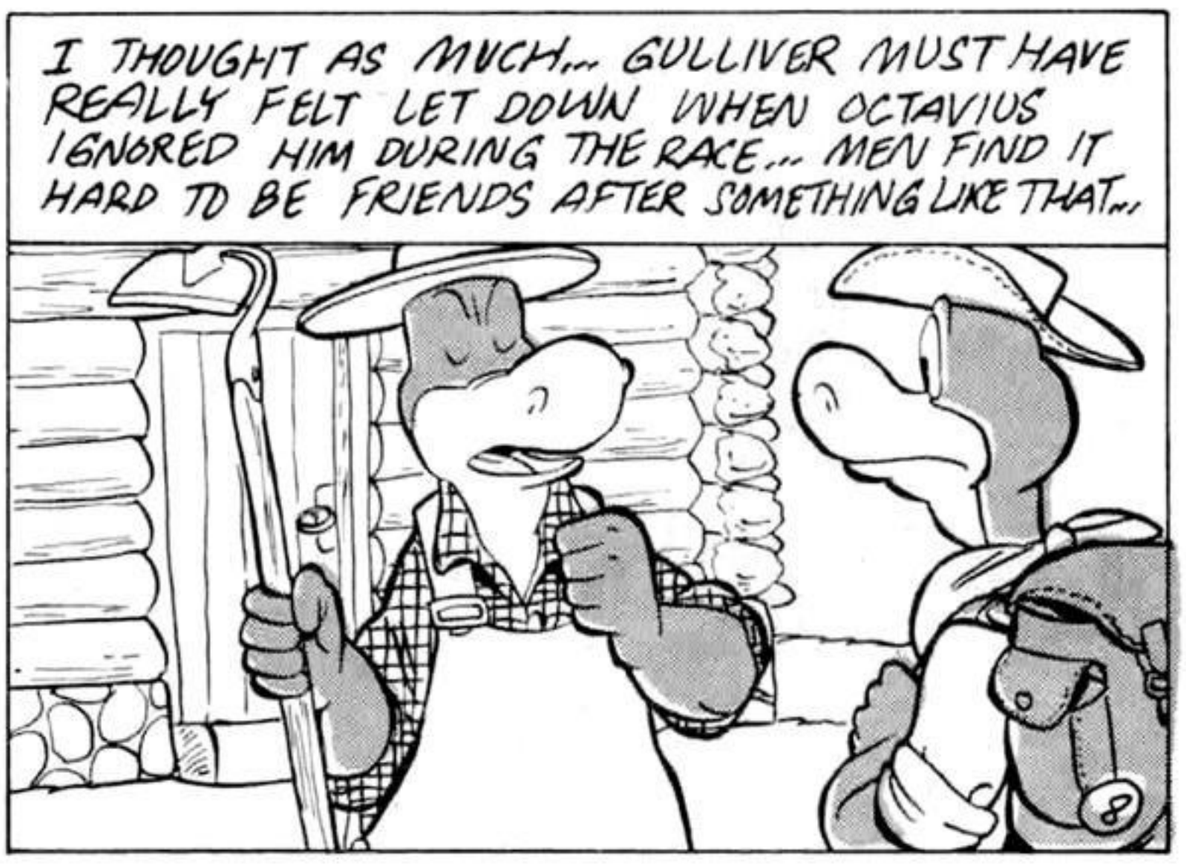

WHAT ABOUT YOU O'GATORS? WHERE DID YOU GO THEN?
WE HAD TO MAKE THE BEST OF A MUCH LESS ATTRACTIVE PLACE OVER IN DISMAL DOWNS...


OCTAVIUS STRUGGLED FOR SOME TIME, HAVING GREAT DIFFICULTY TILLING THE BARREN SOIL OF DISMAL DOWNS...

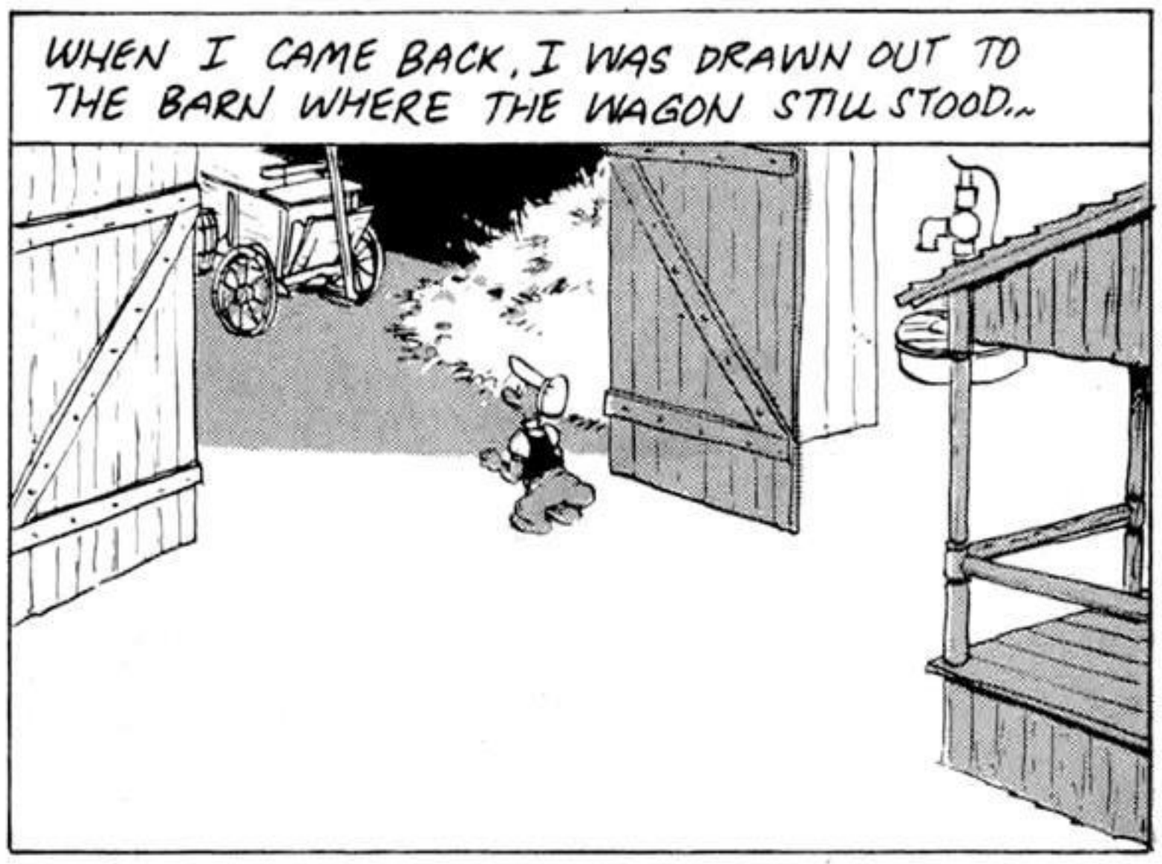

HE QUARRELED CONSTANTLY WITH HUBERT...
THIS WOULDNA HAPPENED IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT DRATTED GNUFF GAL!

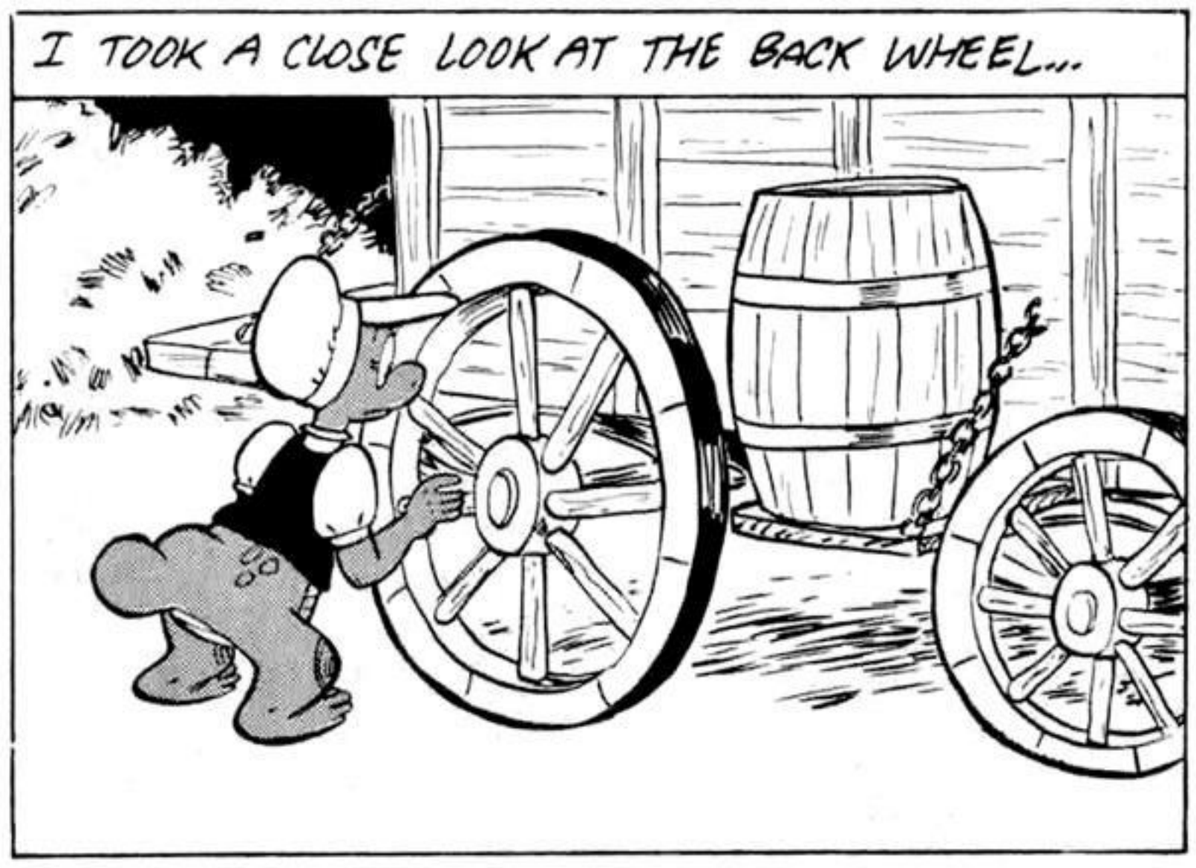

IF YOU DON'T STOP GRIPING ABOUT IT, I MIGHT JUST PACK UP AND LEAVE YOU!
MEBBE THAT'D BE THE BEST THING...
BAM

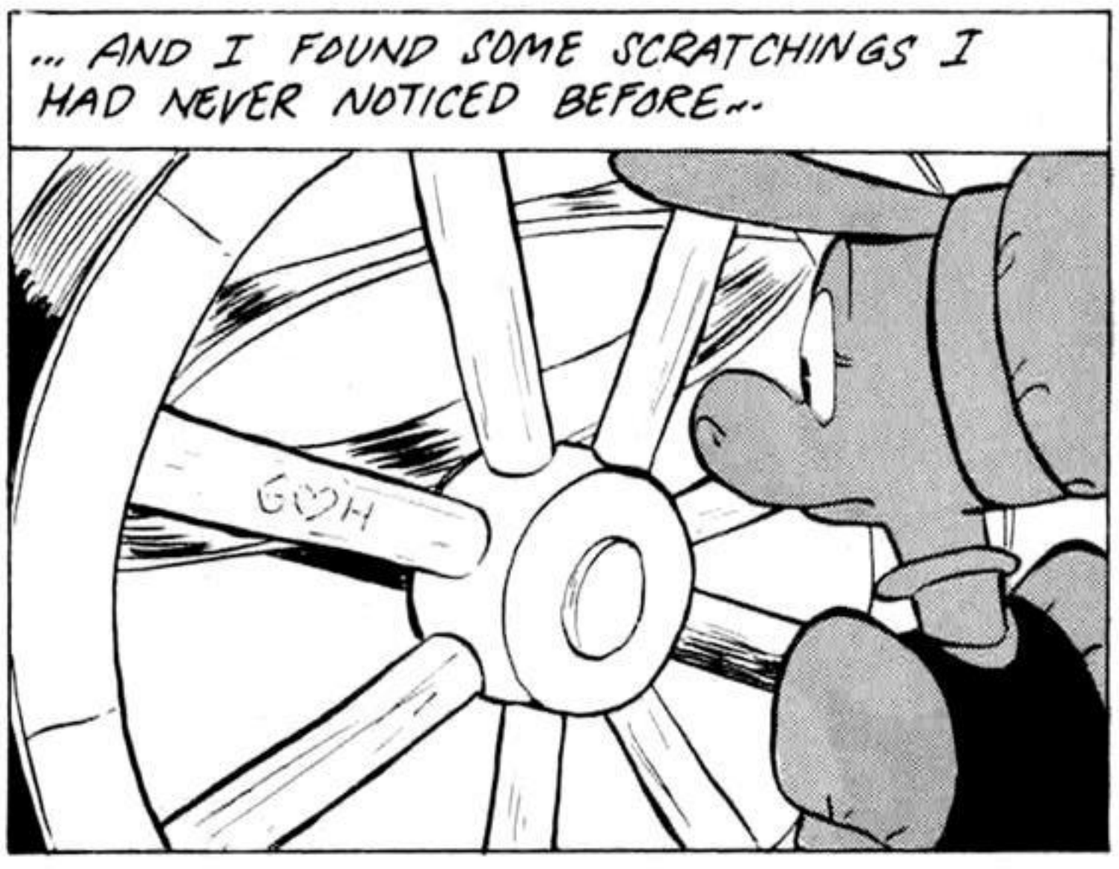

FINALLY, HUBERT LEFT THE FARM... BEFORE HE TOOK OFF, HE TOLD ME HE'D BE GOING BY YOUR PLACE...
AND HE DID, TOO... HE ASKED FOR WORK, BUT GULLIVER TURNED HIM AWAY...

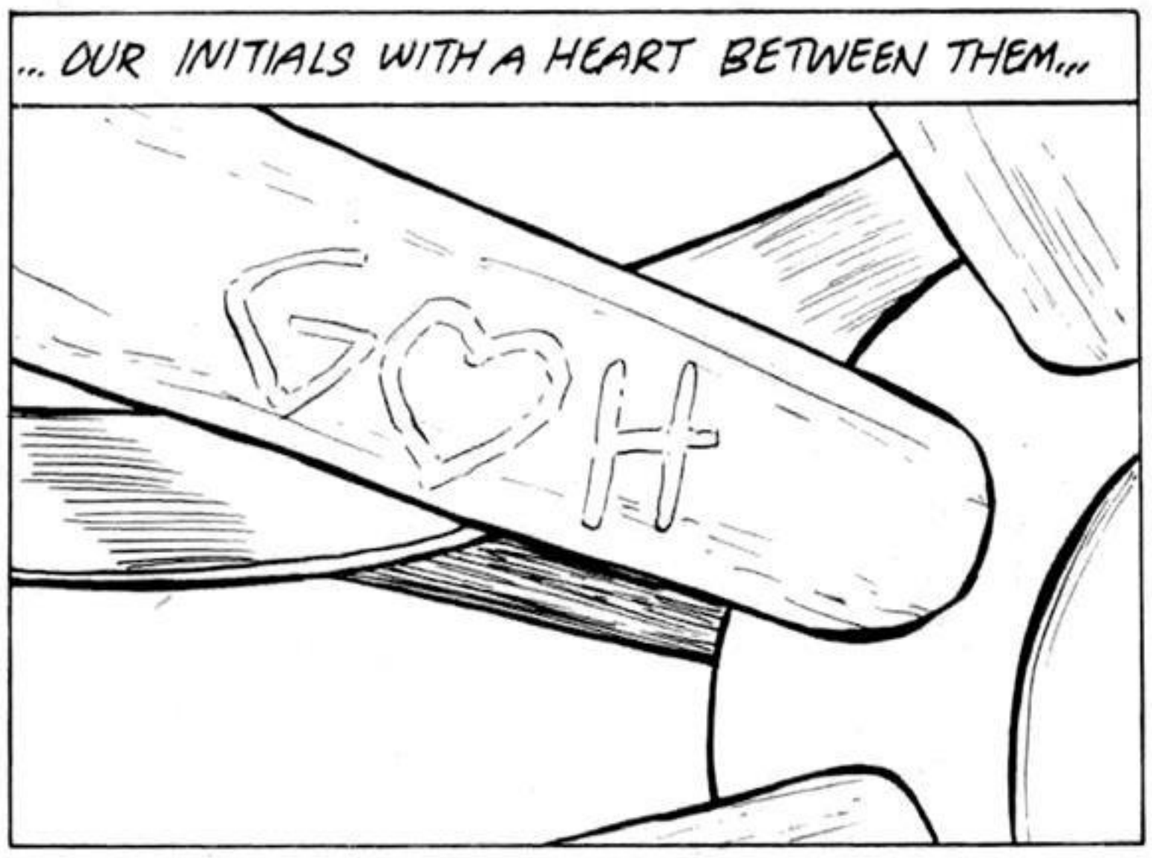

I THOUGHT AS MUCH... GULLIVER MUST HAVE REALLY FELT LET DOWN WHEN OCTAVIUS IGNORED HIM DURING THE RACE... MEN FIND IT HARD TO BE FRIENDS AFTER SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

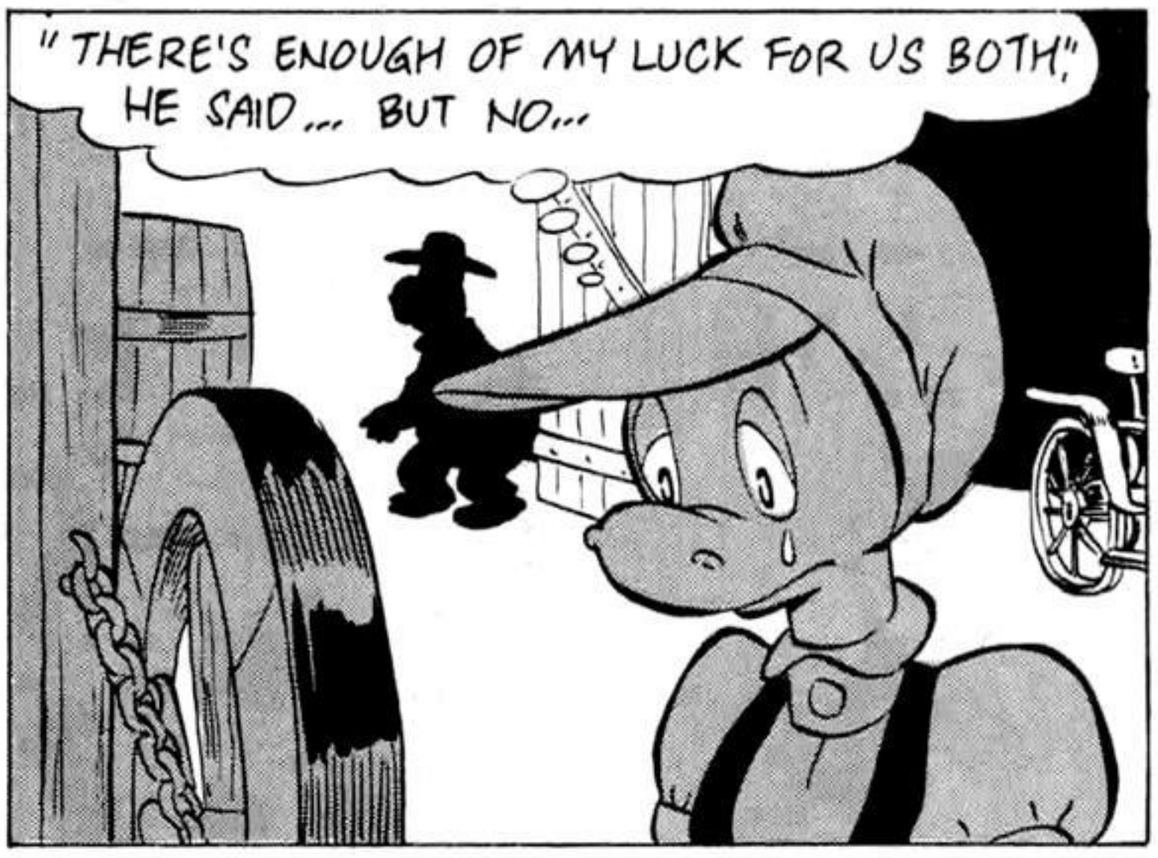
I DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT HOME FROM THE FAIR... I WALKED ALMOST AS IF I WERE ASLEEP...


WHEN I CAME BACK, I WAS DRAWN OUT TO THE BARN WHERE THE WAGON STILL STOOD...


I TOOK A CLOSE LOOK AT THE BACK WHEEL...

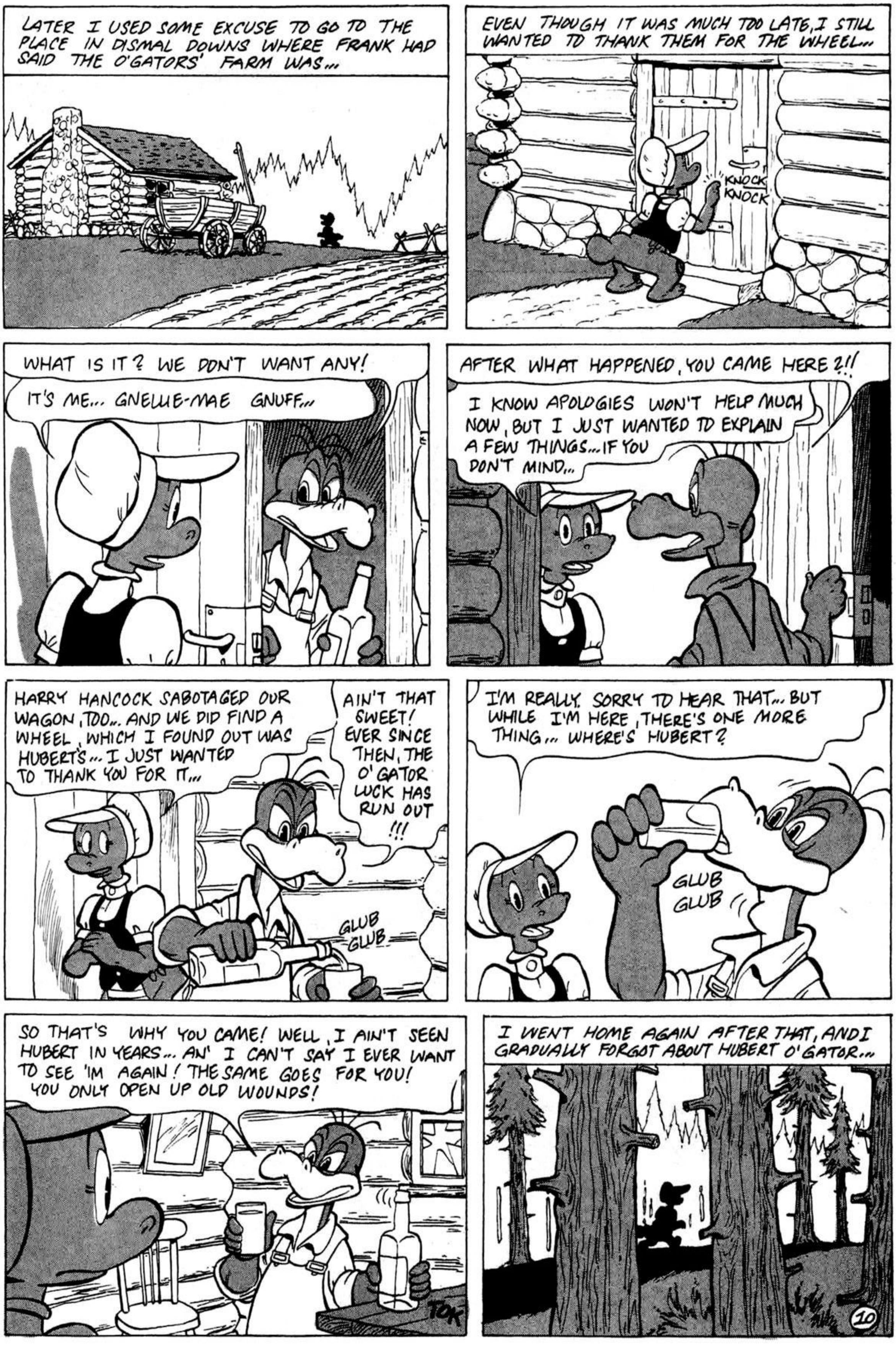

... AND I FOUND SOME SCRATCHINGS I HAD NEVER NOTICED BEFORE...
G♡H

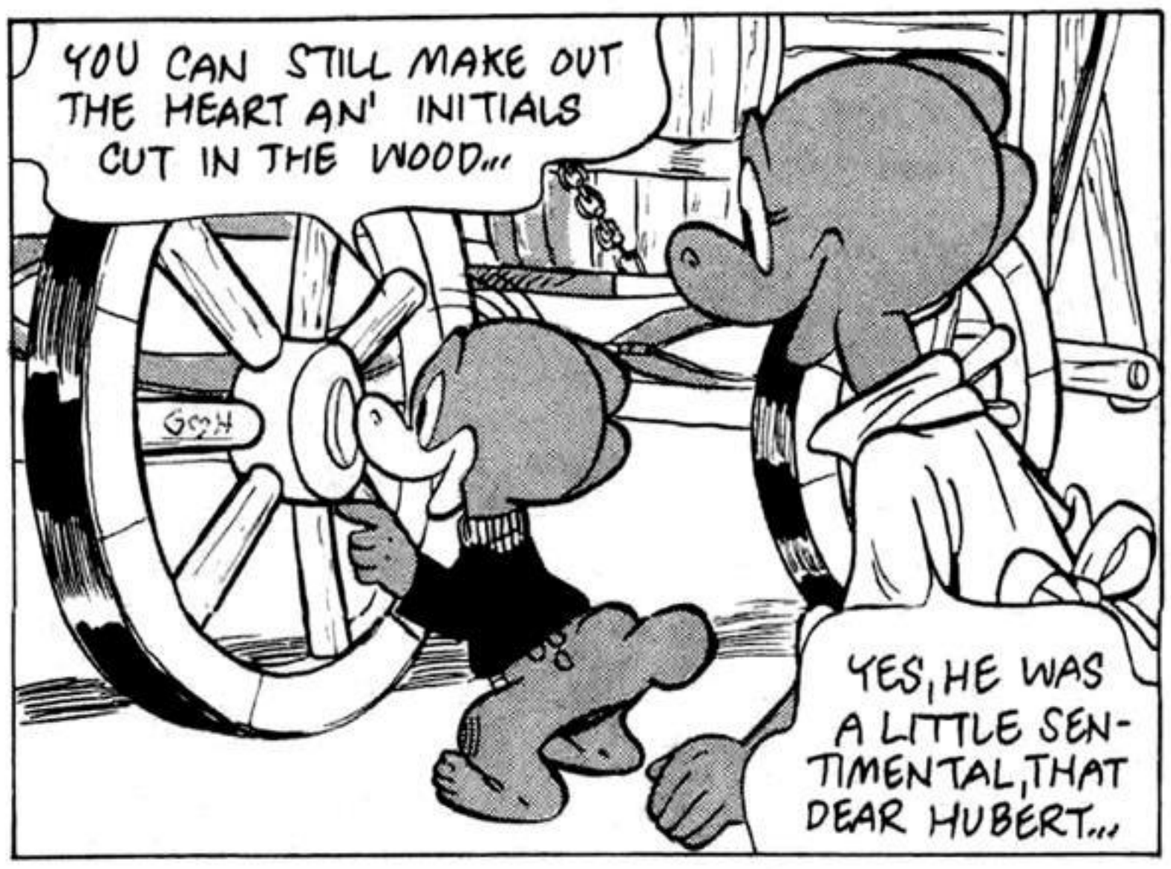

... OUR INITIALS WITH A HEART BETWEEN THEM...
G♡H

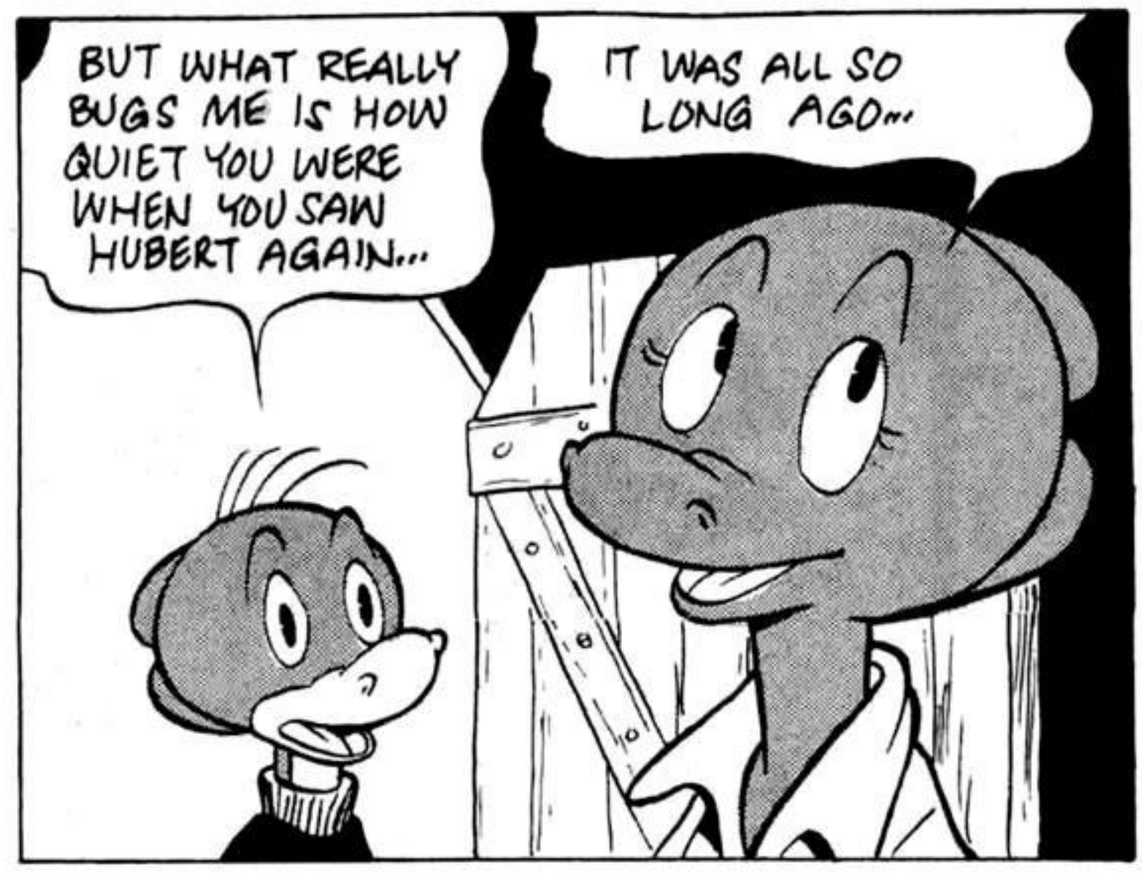

"THERE'S ENOUGH OF MY LUCK FOR US BOTH," HE SAID... BUT NO...

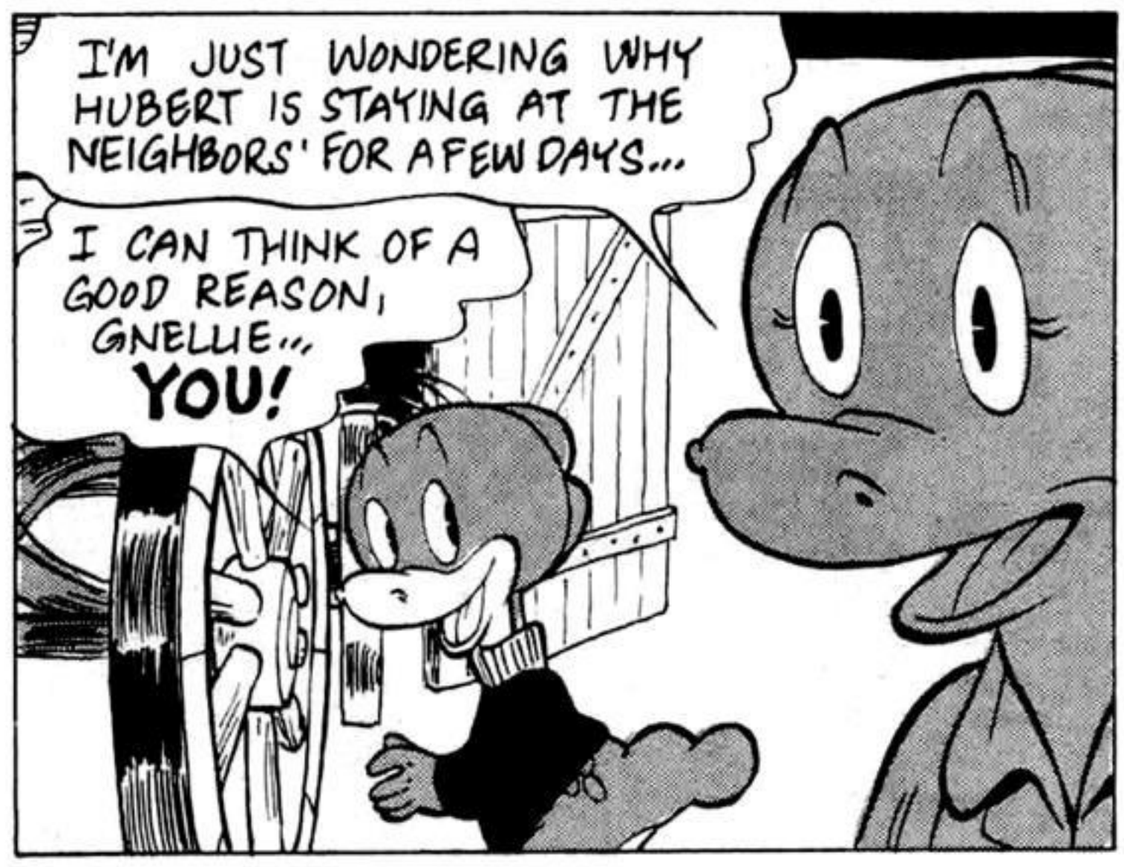
WHAT THE DEVIL YOU DOIN' OUT HERE, GIRL?!!
OH... NOTHING... VERY IMPORTANT...

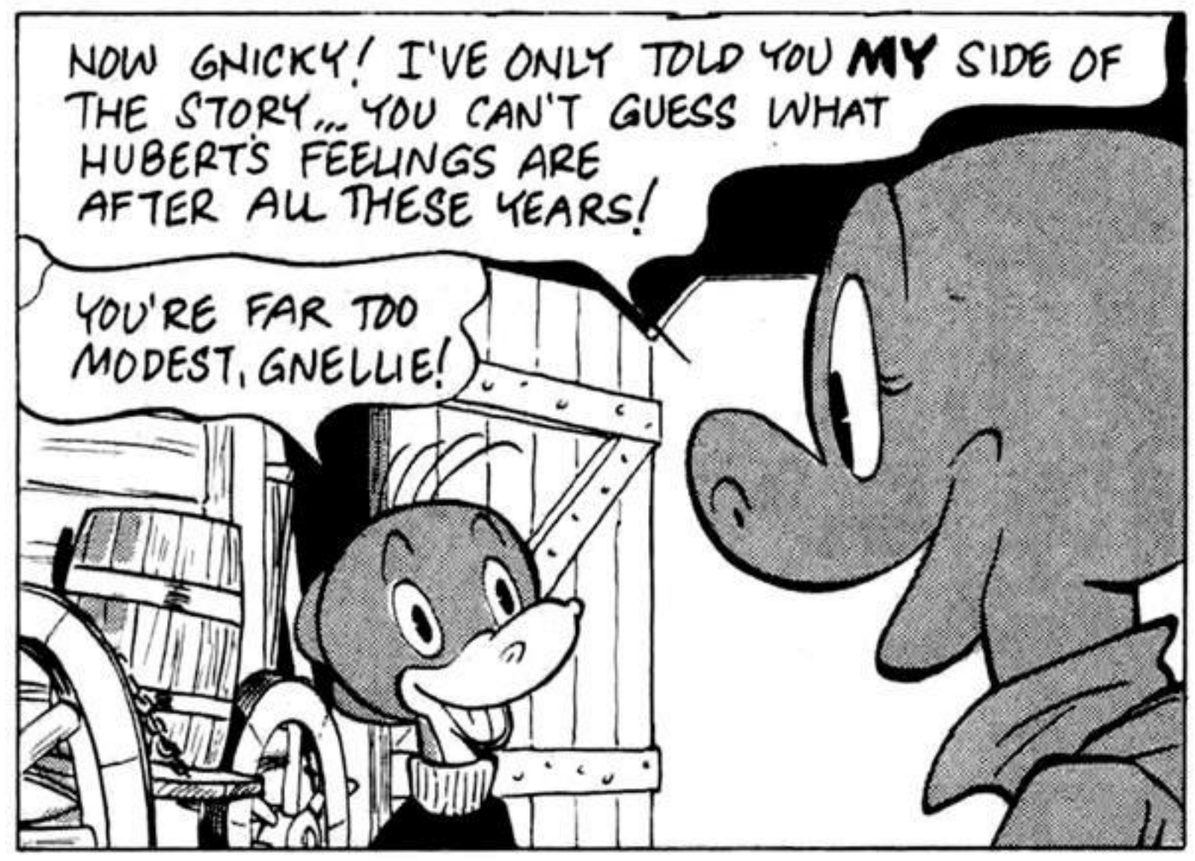
YOU'VE BEEN ACTIN' MIGHTY PECULIAR LATELY! FORGETTIN' EVERYTHIN'! SITTIN' DEAD QUIET AN' JUS' STARIN' OFF INTO SPACE! WHAT'S EATIN' YOU?
... OH... I'M... JUST... TIRED...

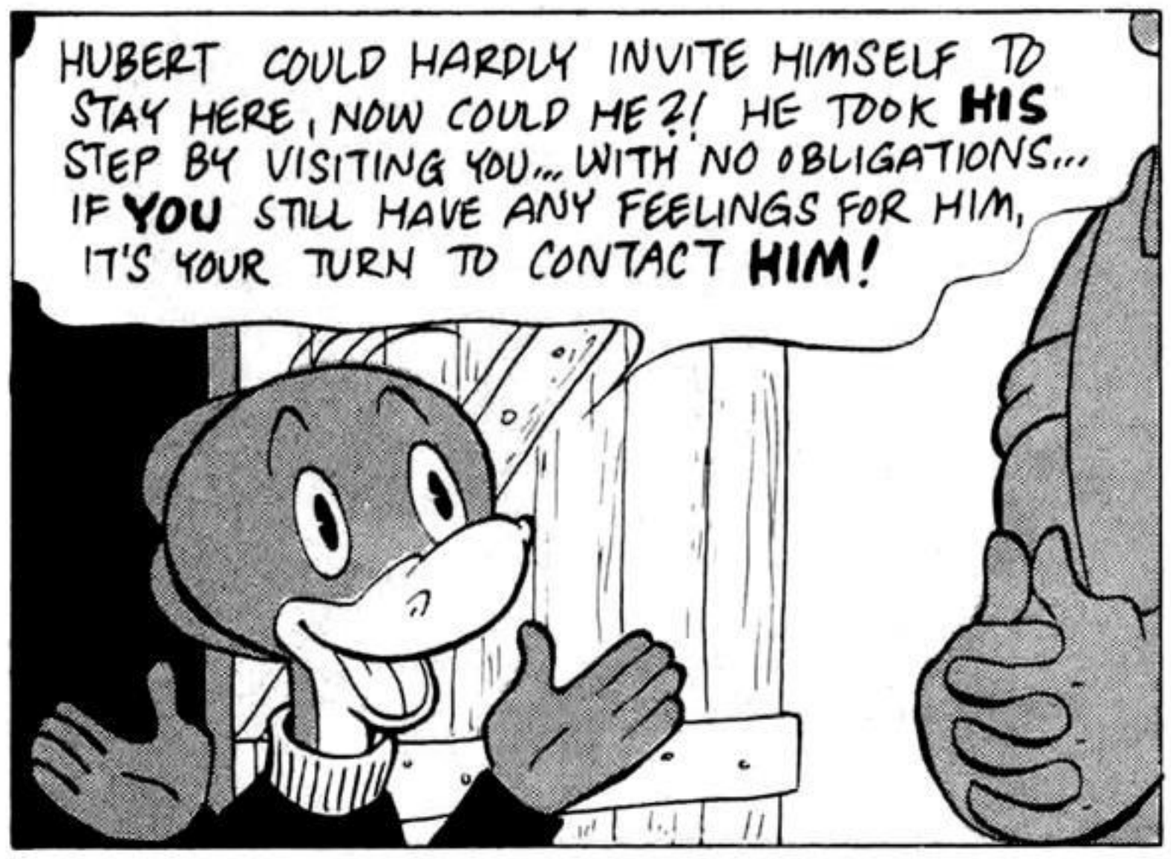

LATER I USED SOME EXCUSE TO GO TO THE PLACE IN DISMAL DOWNS WHERE FRANK HAD SAID THE O'GATORS' FARM WAS...
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MUCH TOO LATE, I STILL WANTED TO THANK THEM FOR THE WHEEL...
KNOCK KNOCK
WHAT IS IT? WE DON'T WANT ANY!
IT'S ME... GNELLIE-MAE GNUFF...
AFTER WHAT HAPPENED, YOU CAME HERE?!!
I KNOW APOLOGIES WON'T HELP MUCH NOW, BUT I JUST WANTED TO EXPLAIN A FEW THINGS... IF YOU DON'T MIND...
HARRY HANCOCK SABOTAGED OUR WAGON, TOO... AND WE DID FIND A WHEEL, WHICH I FOUND OUT WAS HUBERT'S... I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR IT...
AIN'T THAT SWEET! EVER SINCE THEN, THE O'GATOR LUCK HAS RUN OUT !!!
GLUB GLUB
I'M REALLY SORRY TO HEAR THAT... BUT WHILE I'M HERE, THERE'S ONE MORE THING... WHERE'S HUBERT?
GLUB GLUB
SO THAT'S WHY YOU CAME! WELL, I AIN'T SEEN HUBERT IN YEARS... AN' I CAN'T SAY I EVER WANT TO SEE 'IM AGAIN! THE SAME GOES FOR YOU! YOU ONLY OPEN UP OLD WOUNDS!
TOK
I WENT HOME AGAIN AFTER THAT, AND I GRADUALLY FORGOT ABOUT HUBERT O'GATOR...

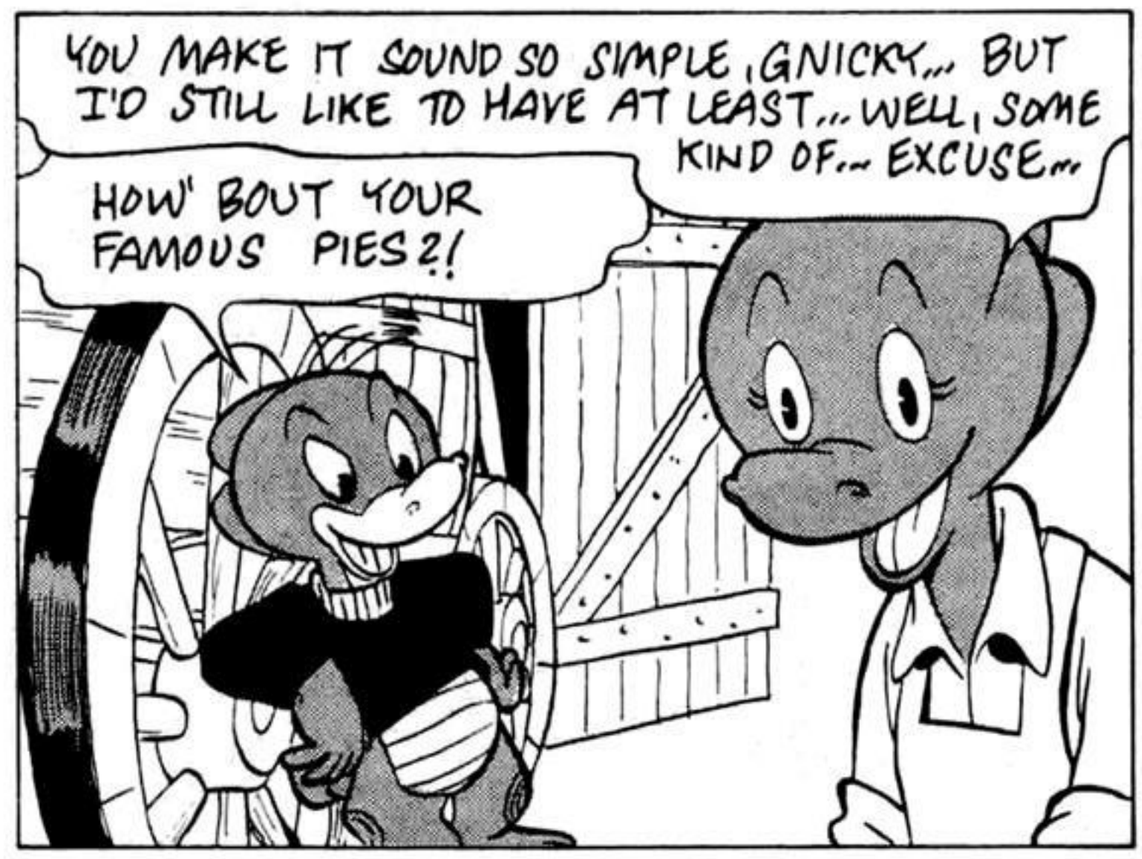

YOU CAN STILL MAKE OUT THE HEART AN' INITIALS CUT IN THE WOOD...
G&H
YES, HE WAS A LITTLE SENTIMENTAL, THAT DEAR HUBERT...

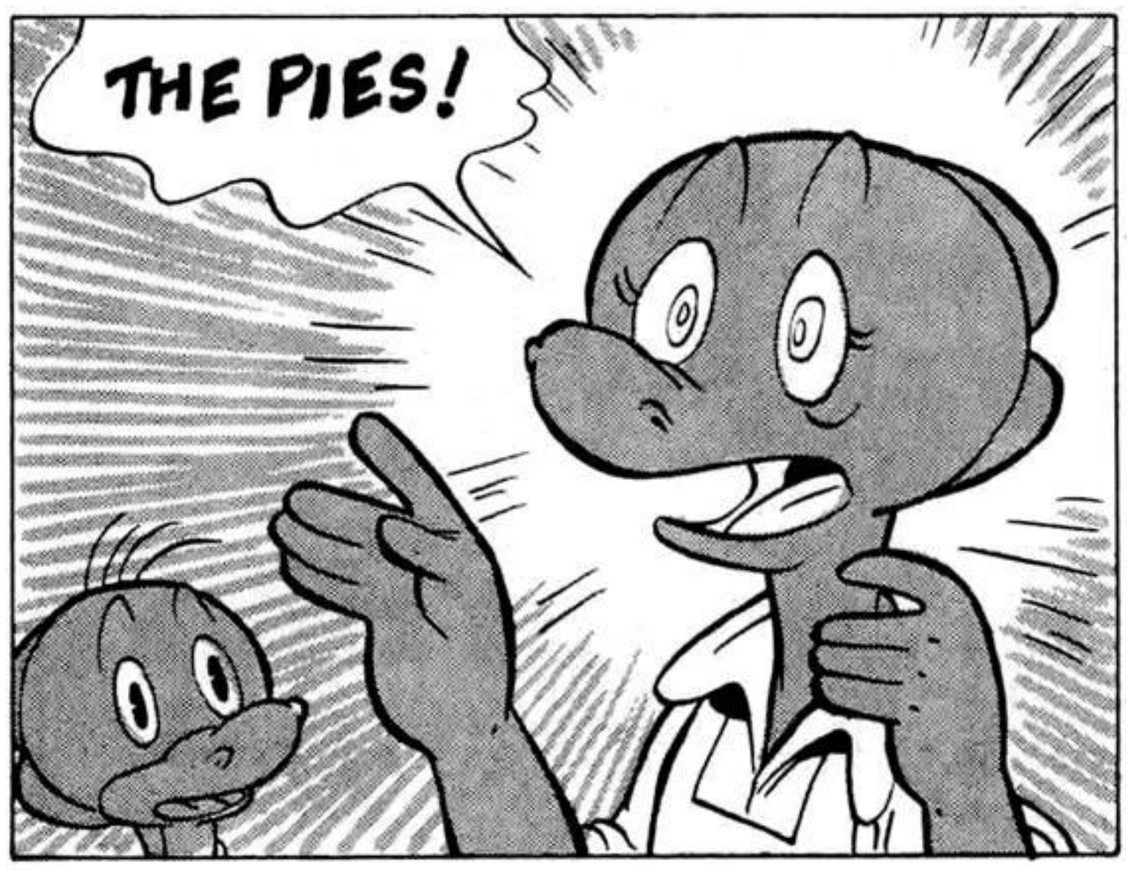

BUT WHAT REALLY BUGS ME IS HOW QUIET YOU WERE WHEN YOU SAW HUBERT AGAIN...
IT WAS ALL SO LONG AGO...

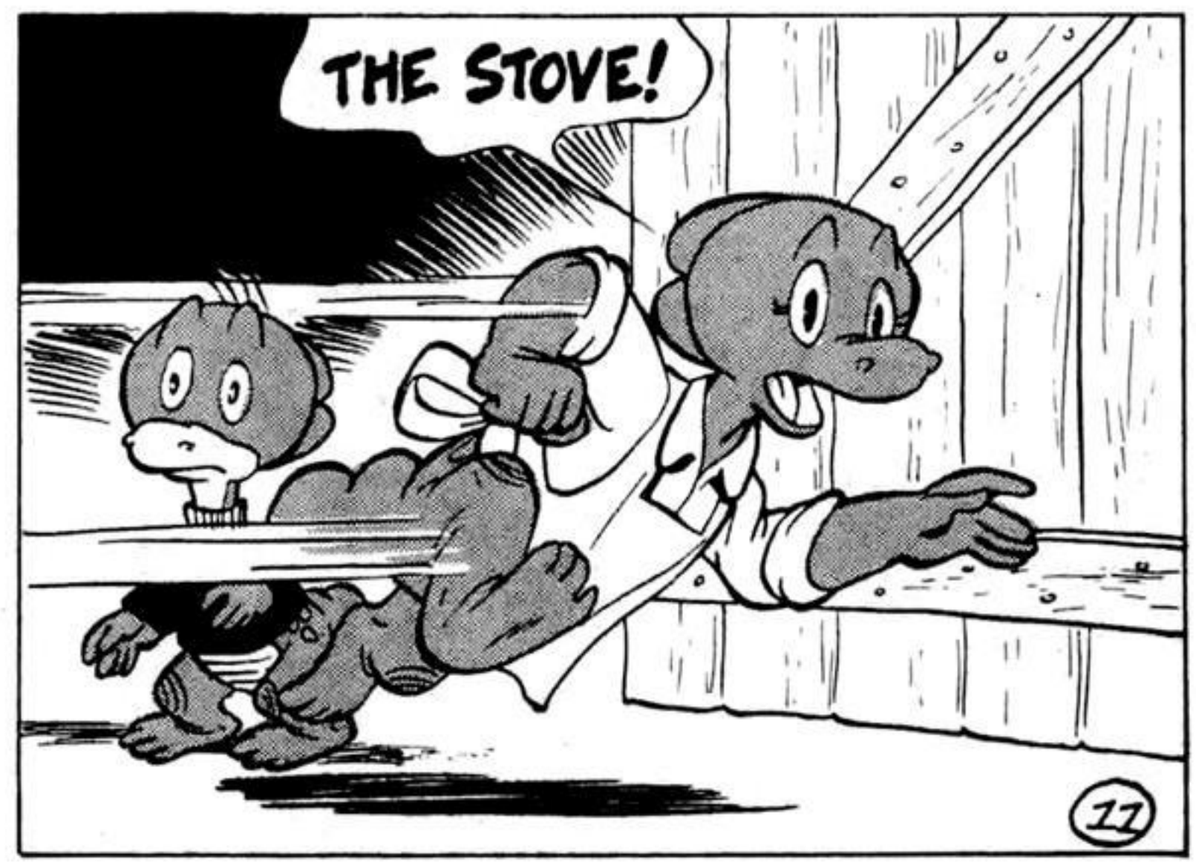

I'M JUST WONDERING WHY HUBERT IS STAYING AT THE NEIGHBORS' FOR A FEW DAYS...
I CAN THINK OF A GOOD REASON, GNELLIE... YOU!

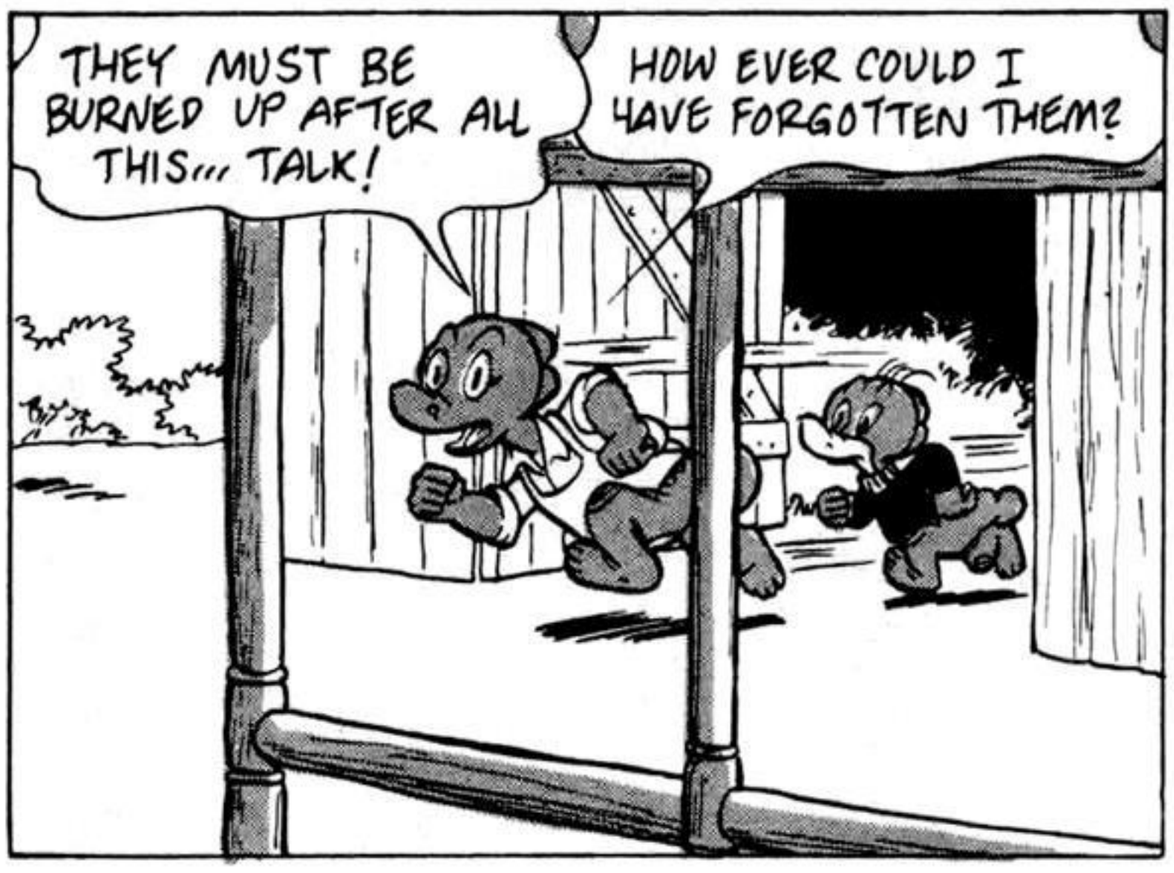

NOW GNICKY! I'VE ONLY TOLD YOU MY SIDE OF THE STORY... YOU CAN'T GUESS WHAT HUBERT'S FEELINGS ARE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!
YOU'RE FAR TOO MODEST, GNELLIE!

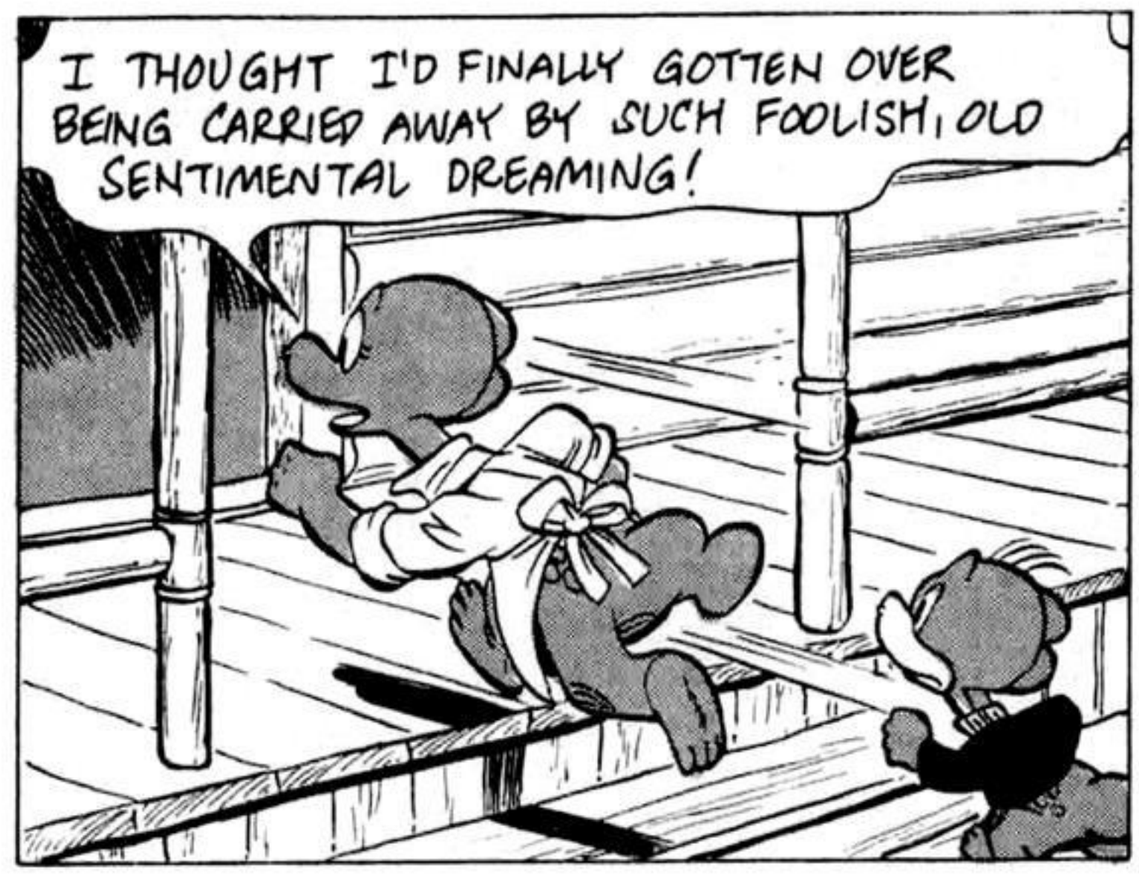

HUBERT COULD HARDLY INVITE HIMSELF TO STAY HERE, NOW COULD HE?! HE TOOK HIS STEP BY VISITING YOU... WITH NO OBLIGATIONS... IF YOU STILL HAVE ANY FEELINGS FOR HIM, IT'S YOUR TURN TO CONTACT HIM!


YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO SIMPLE, GNICKY... BUT I'D STILL LIKE TO HAVE AT LEAST... WELL, SOME KIND OF... EXCUSE...
HOW' BOUT YOUR FAMOUS PIES?!


THE PIES!


THE STOVE!


THEY MUST BE BURNED UP AFTER ALL THIS... TALK!
HOW EVER COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN THEM?


I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY GOTTEN OVER BEING CARRIED AWAY BY SUCH FOOLISH, OLD SENTIMENTAL DREAMING!

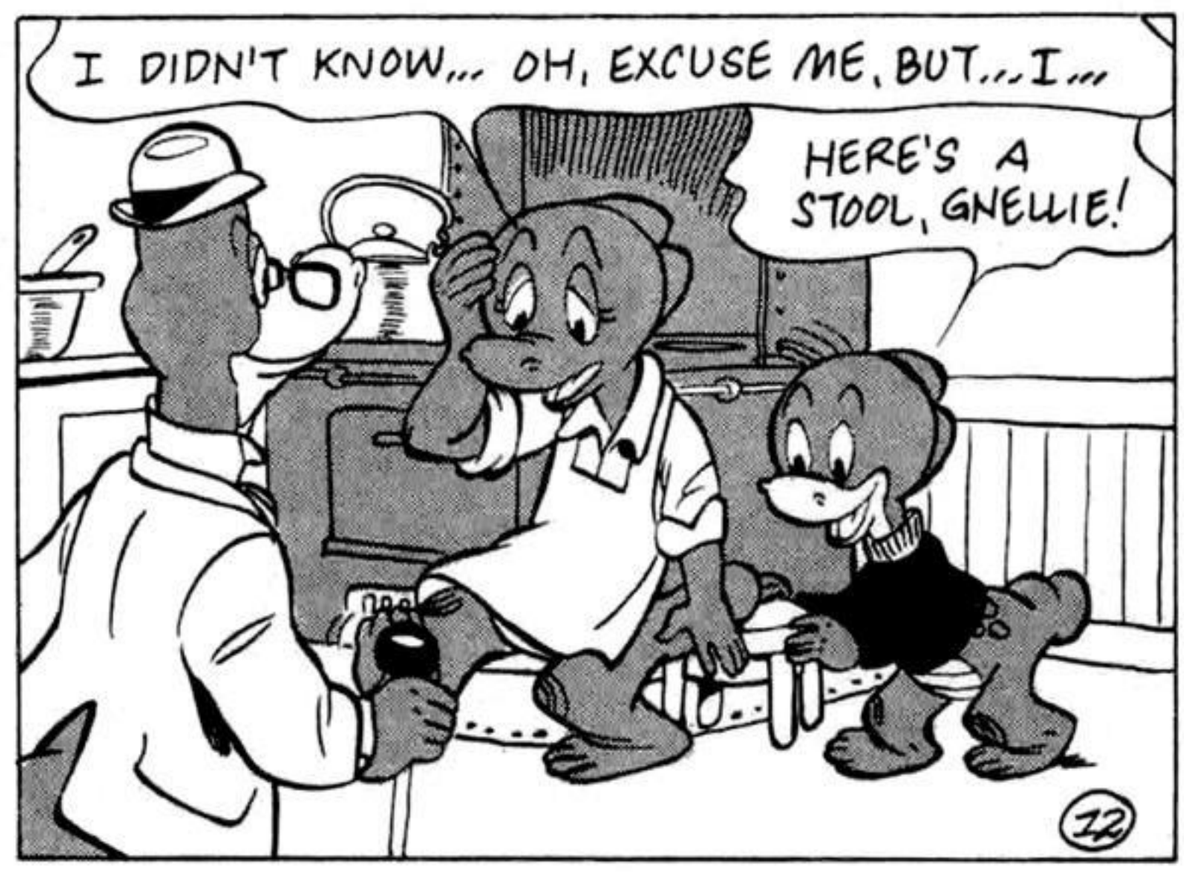
WHY, THEY DON'T SMELL BURNED AT ALL ???

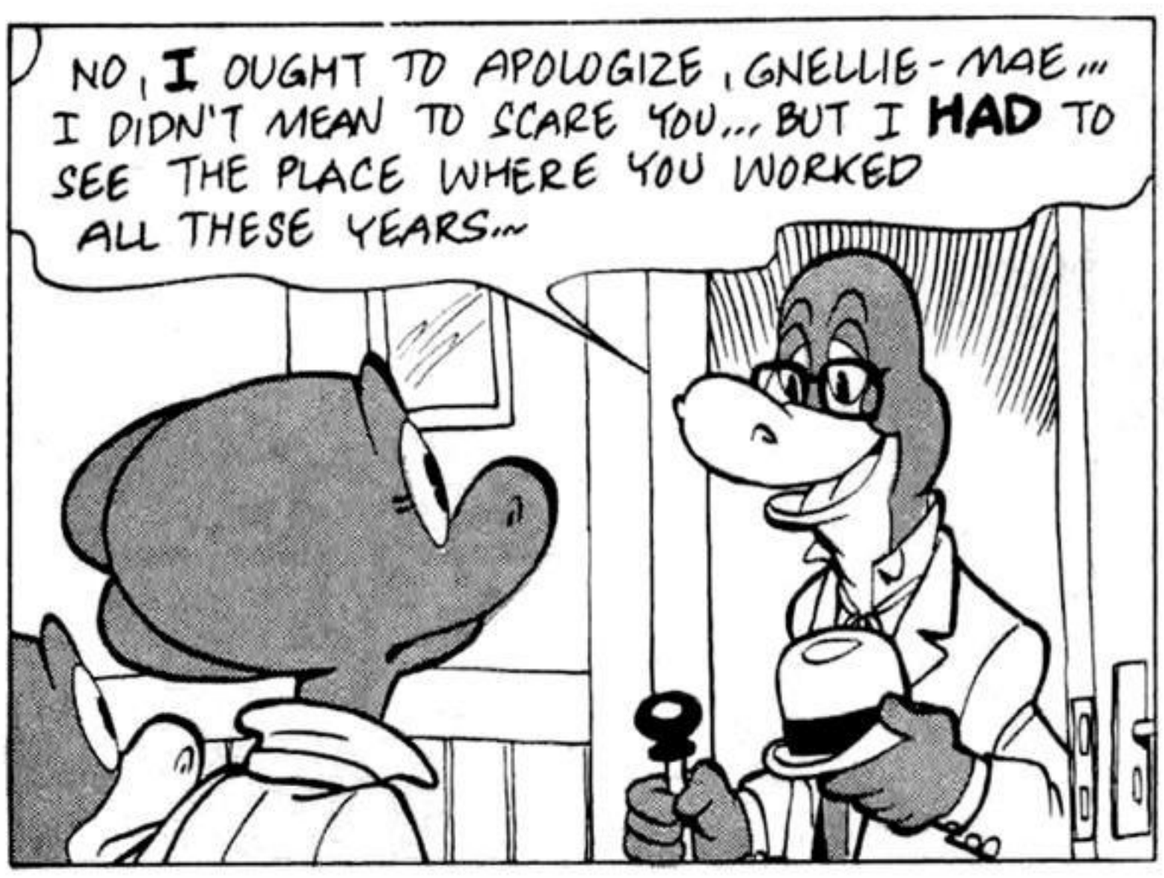
NO, THEY ARE ALL RIGHT! WHAT A RELIEF!
YUM! THEY SMELL REAL GOOD!

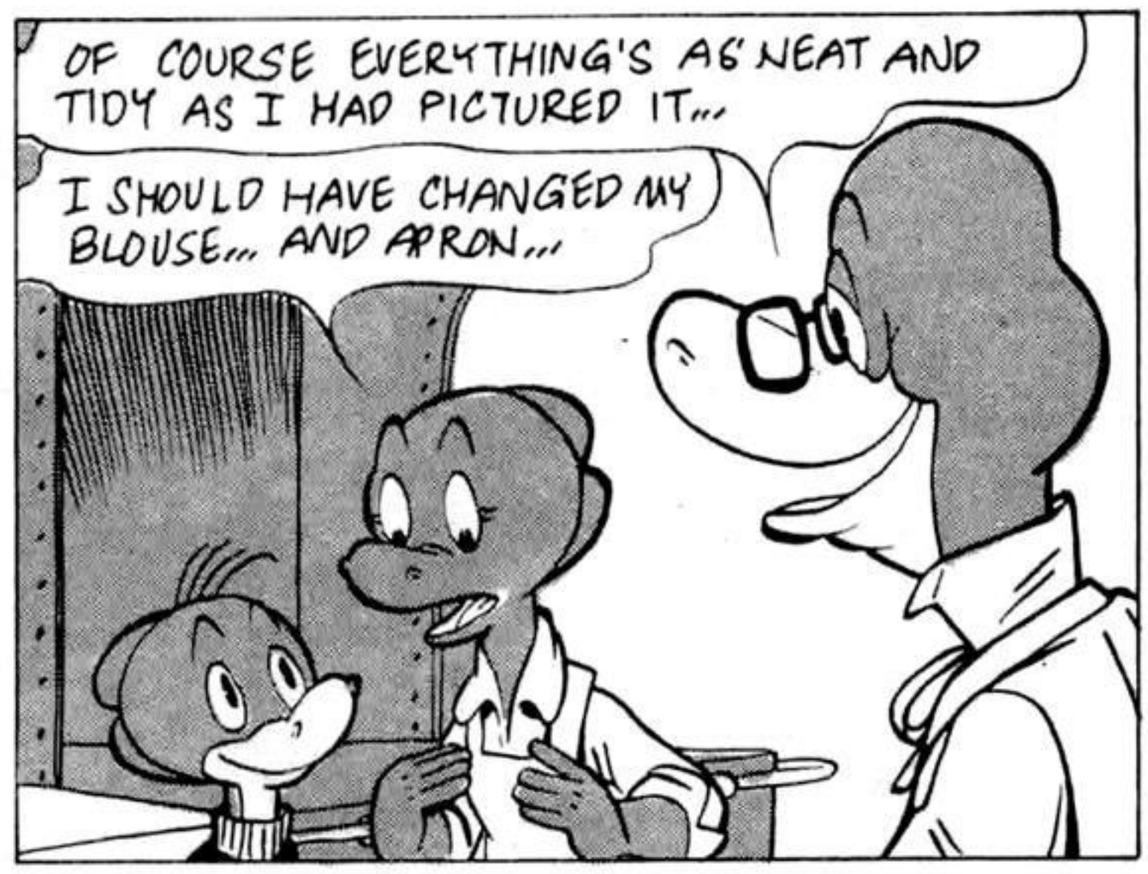
BUT I'M SURE I LEFT THE STOVE BURNING... WHO PUT THE FIRE OUT ???

I MUST ADMIT THAT I'M THE GUILTY PARTY...

YOU? HUBERT?! HERE?!!


I DIDN'T KNOW... OH, EXCUSE ME, BUT... I...
HERE'S A STOOL, GNELLIE!

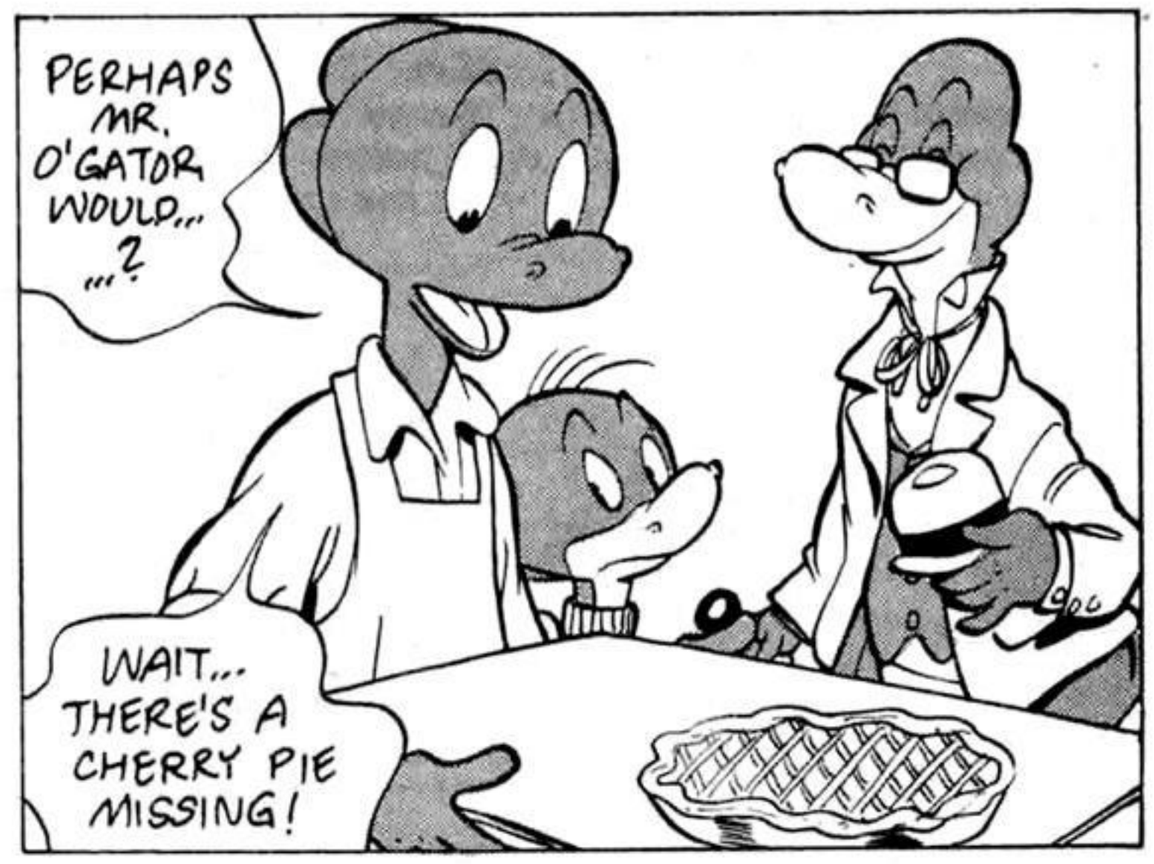

NO, I OUGHT TO APOLOGIZE, GNELLIE-MAE... I DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU... BUT I HAD TO SEE THE PLACE WHERE YOU WORKED ALL THESE YEARS...

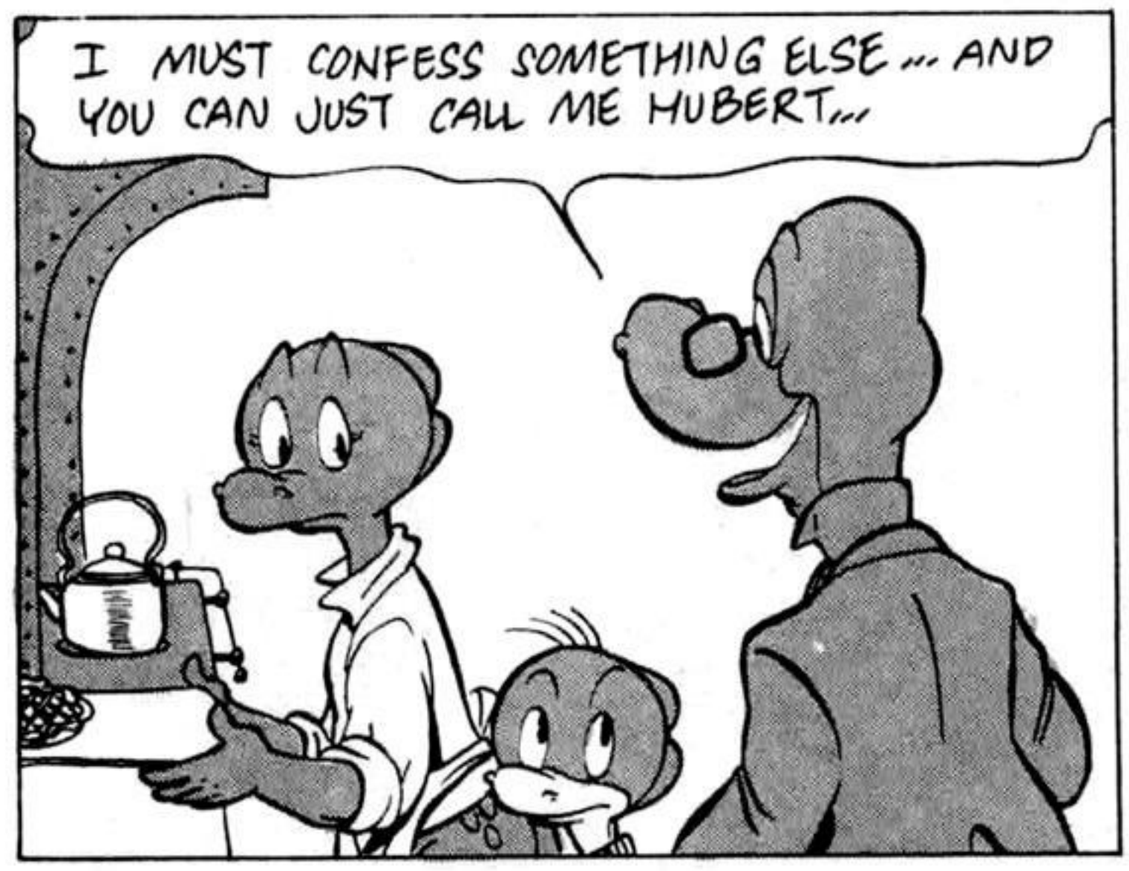

OF COURSE EVERYTHING'S AS NEAT AND TIDY AS I HAD PICTURED IT...
I SHOULD HAVE CHANGED MY BLOUSE... AND APRON...

I FELT I OUGHT TO FRESHEN UP AFTER MY TRIP AND TOOK THE LIBERTY OF COMING BACK TO USE THE SINK, BUT NO ONE WAS HERE AT THE TIME...
I MUST LOOK DREADFUL...

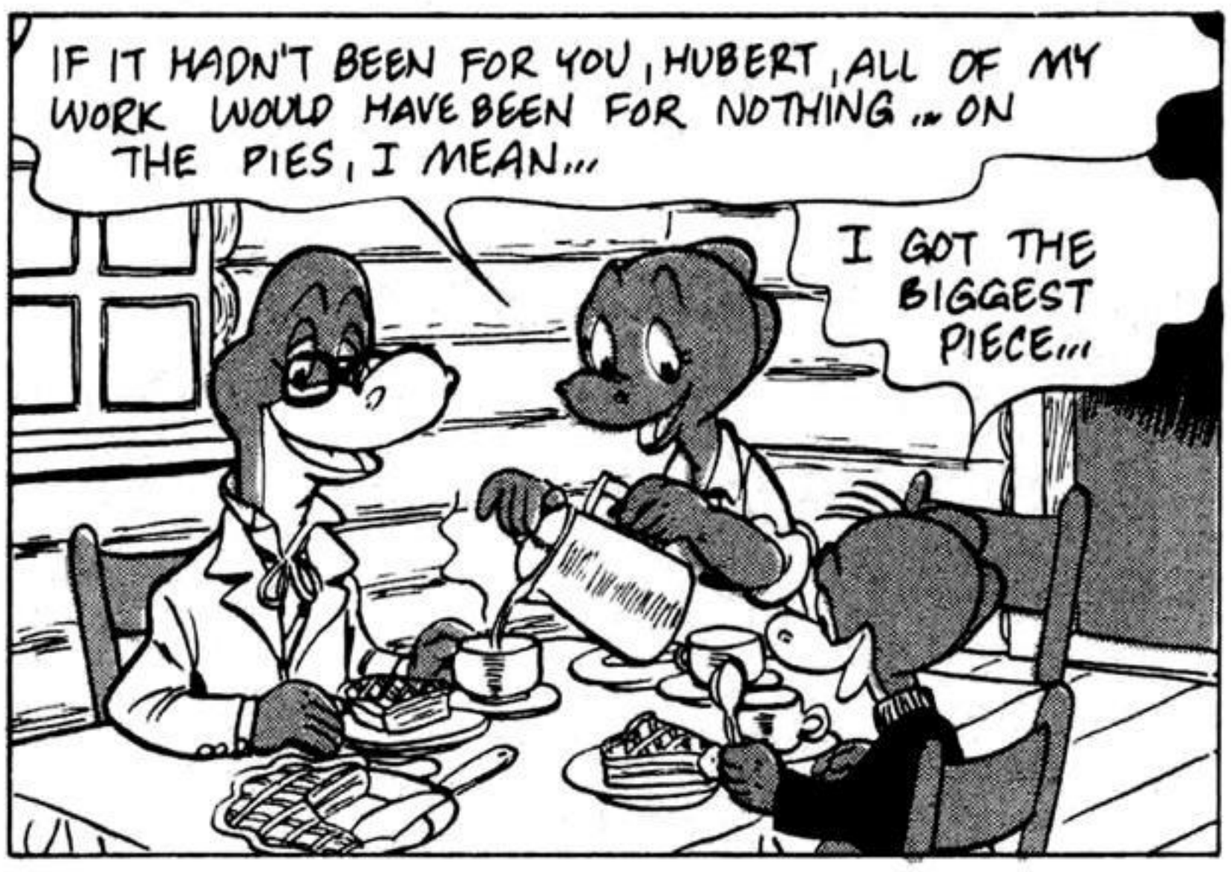
YOU LOOK SWELL, GNELLIE... NOW, WHAT ABOUT THE PIES?
THE PIES...? OH... THE PIES! YES!

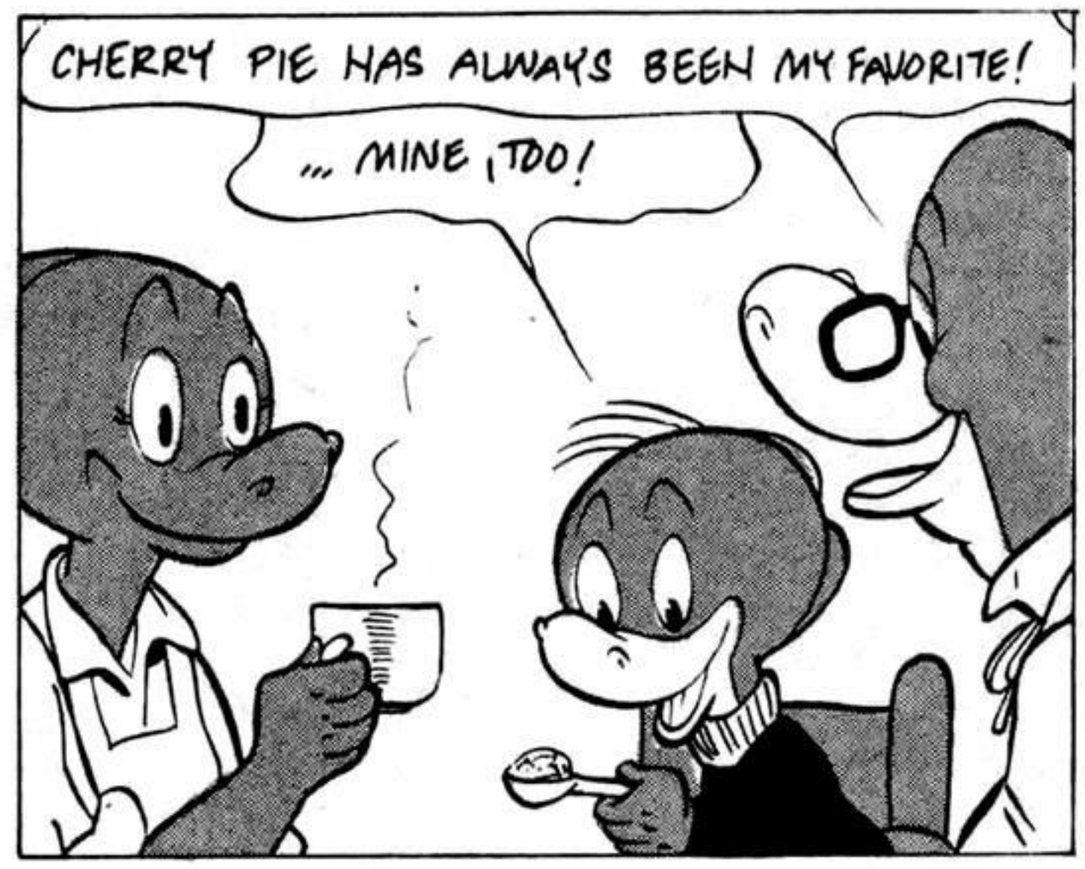
GNELLIE'S A LITTLE RATTLED TODAY!
I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY...

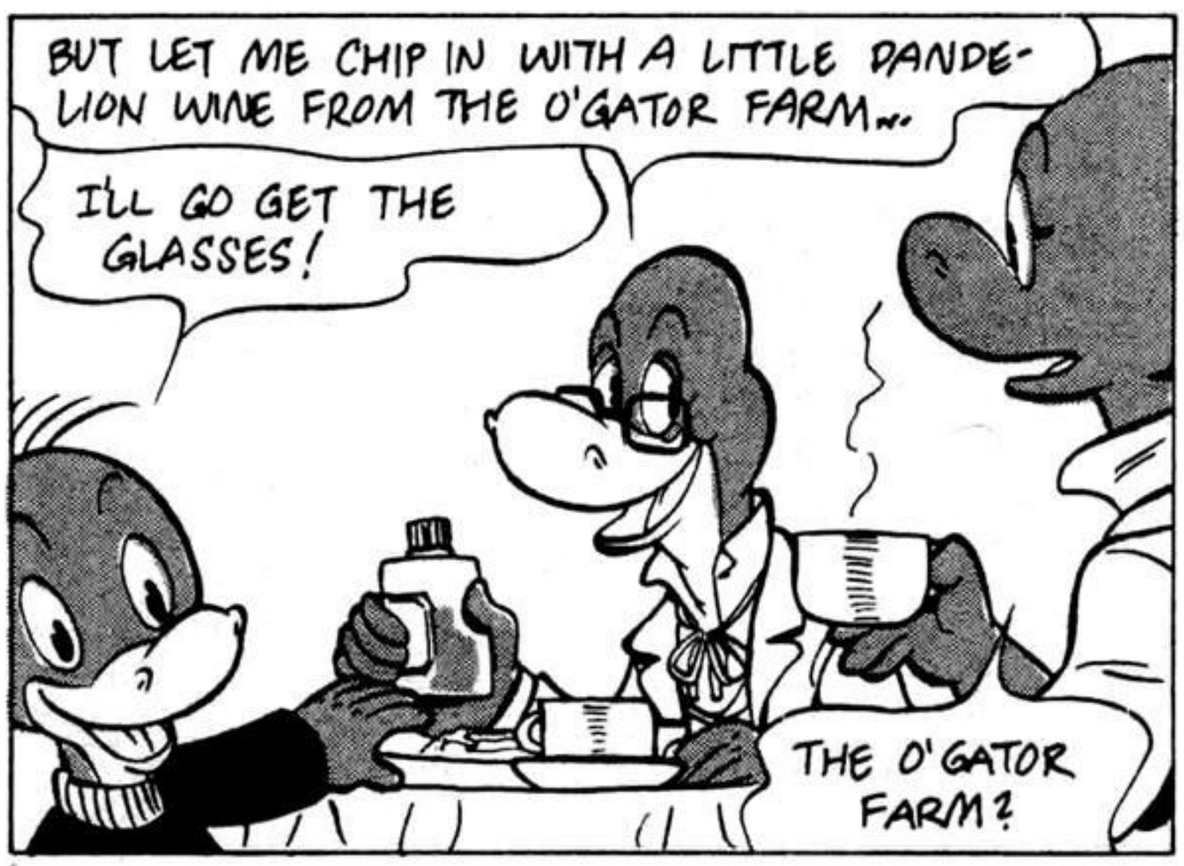

PERHAPS MR. O'GATOR WOULD... ...?
WAIT... THERE'S A CHERRY PIE MISSING!


I MUST CONFESS SOMETHING ELSE... AND YOU CAN JUST CALL ME HUBERT...

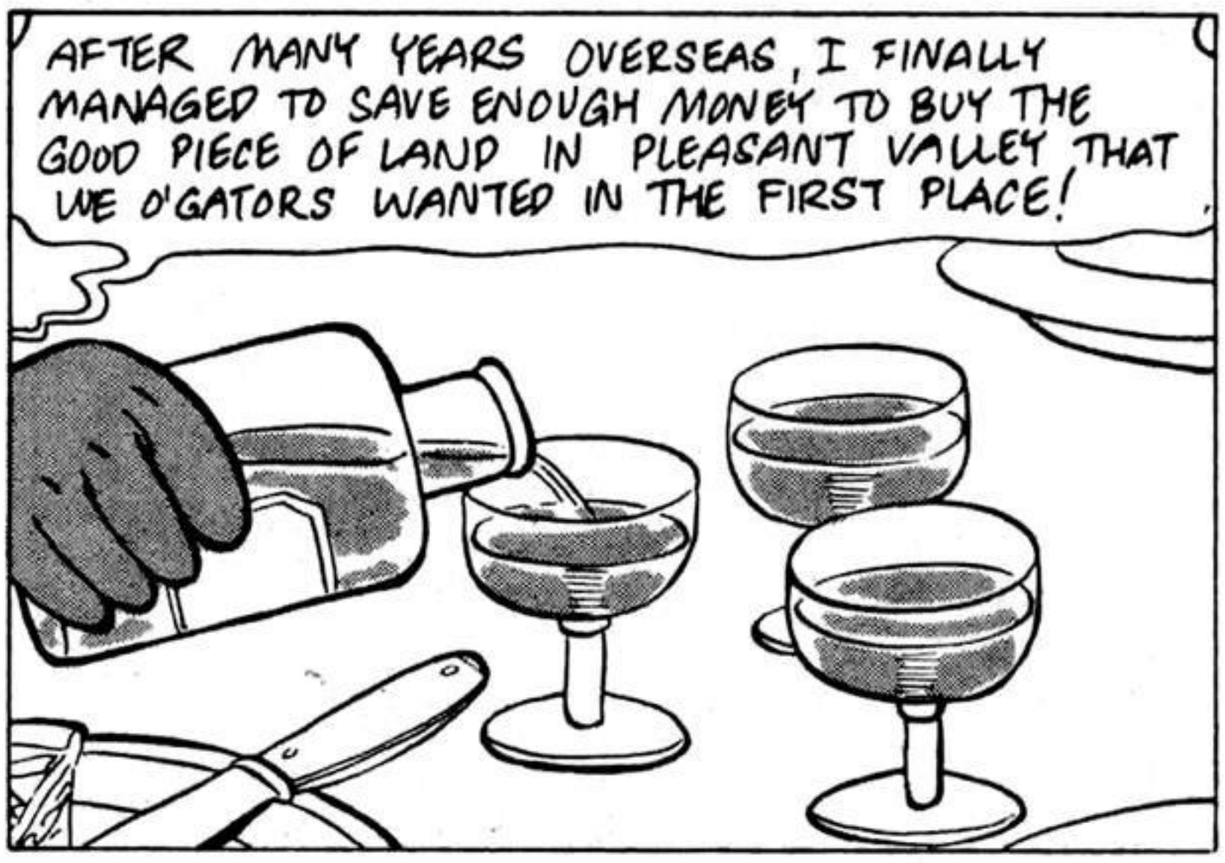
AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF WAITING, YOU MUST FORGIVE A POOR WANDERING VAGABOND IF HE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF A SITUATION... TRULY THEY WERE IRRESISTIBLE!
OH, ALL RIGHT...

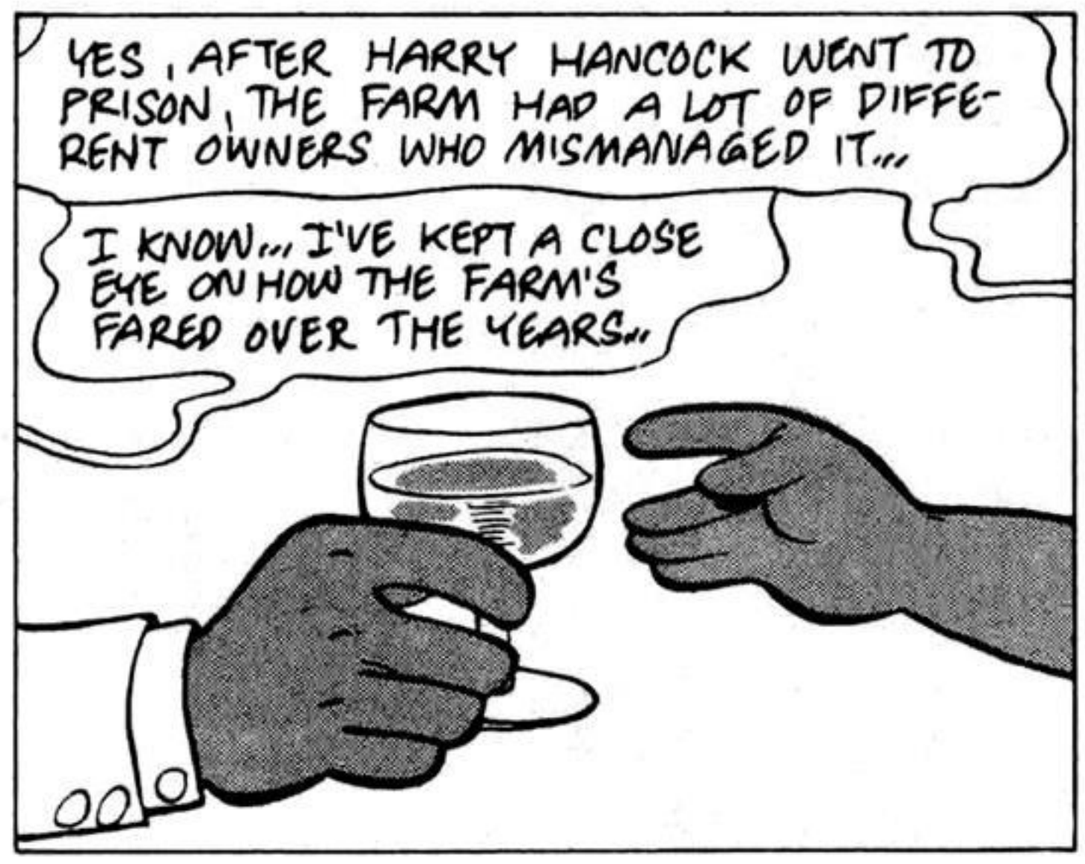

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU, HUBERT, ALL OF MY WORK WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING... ON THE PIES, I MEAN...
I GOT THE BIGGEST PIECE...


CHERRY PIE HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY FAVORITE!
... MINE, TOO!

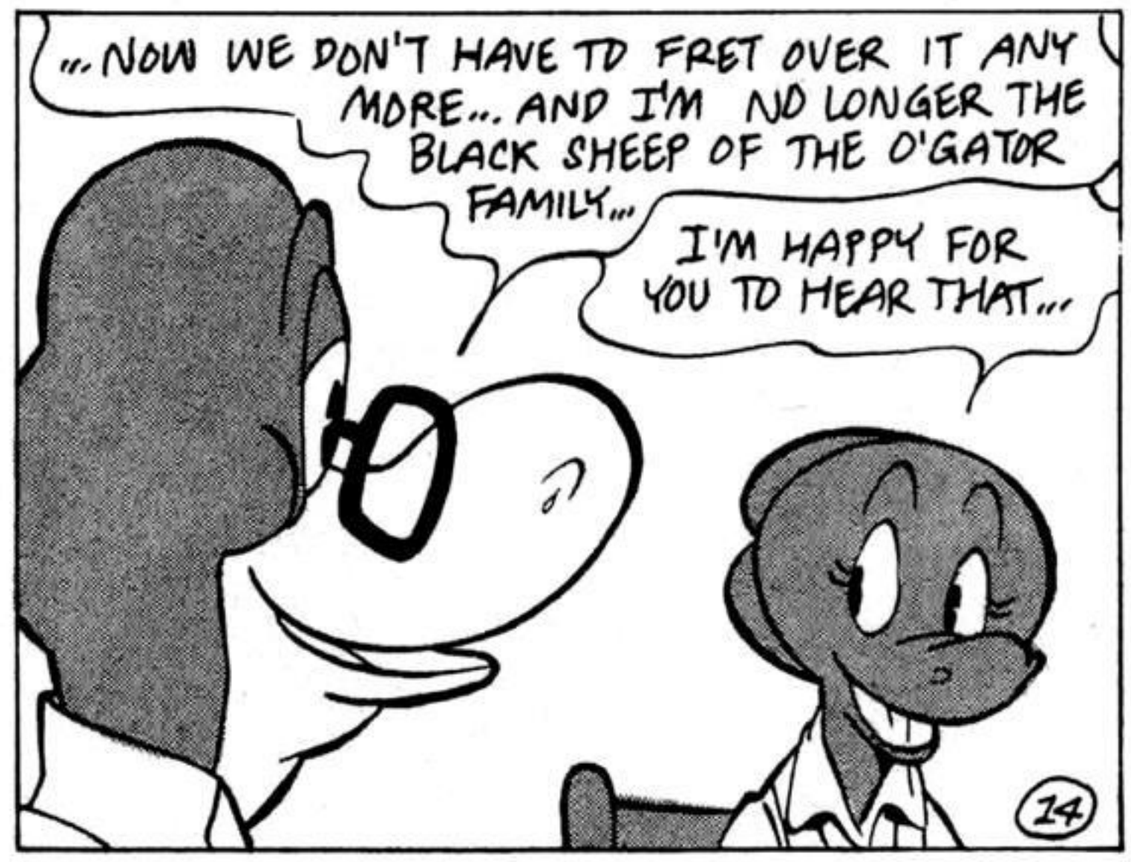

BUT LET ME CHIP IN WITH A LITTLE DANDELION WINE FROM THE O'GATOR FARM...
I'LL GO GET THE GLASSES!
THE O'GATOR FARM?

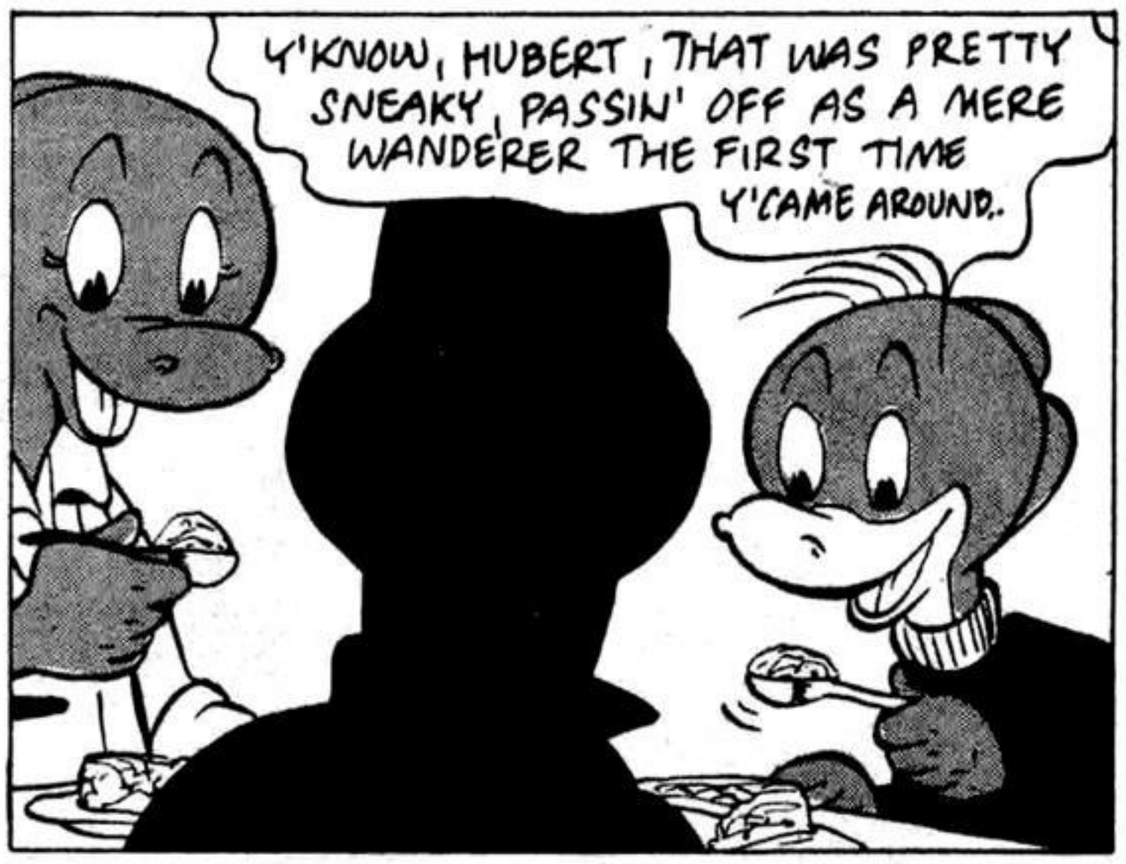
I THOUGHT YOU O'GATORS GAVE UP FARMING WHEN OLD OCTAVIUS SOLD THE PLACE IN DISMAL DOWNS A FEW YEARS AGO?
NOT ME...

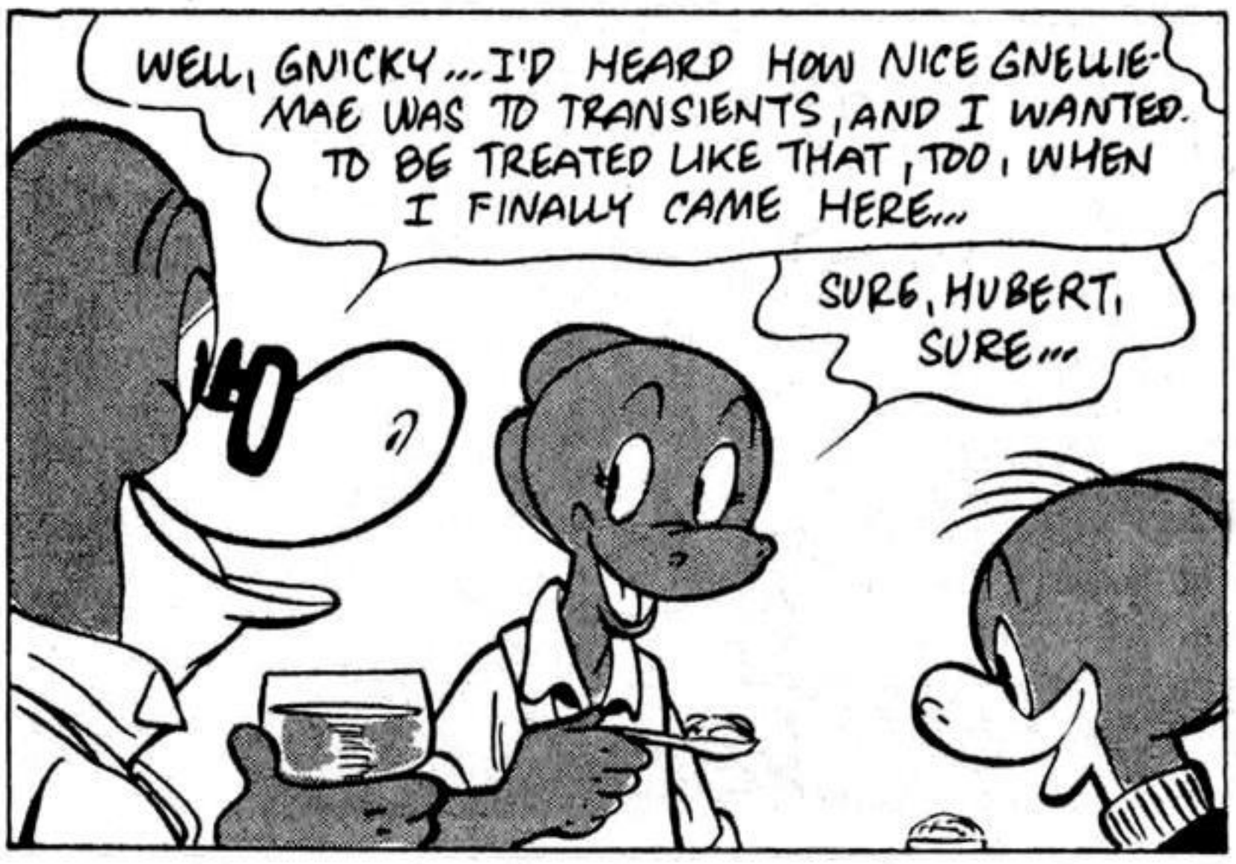

AFTER MANY YEARS OVERSEAS, I FINALLY MANAGED TO SAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY THE GOOD PIECE OF LAND IN PLEASANT VALLEY THAT WE O'GATORS WANTED IN THE FIRST PLACE!


YES, AFTER HARRY HANCOCK WENT TO PRISON, THE FARM HAD A LOT OF DIFFERENT OWNERS WHO MISMANAGED IT...
I KNOW... I'VE KEPT A CLOSE EYE ON HOW THE FARM'S FARED OVER THE YEARS...

BUT NOW IT'S MINE... FOR YEARS I'VE FELT THAT THE FAMILY LOST OUT ON THE FARM BECAUSE OF ME...
... AND ME!


... NOW WE DON'T HAVE TO FRET OVER IT ANY MORE... AND I'M NO LONGER THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE O'GATOR FAMILY...
I'M HAPPY FOR YOU TO HEAR THAT...





END

... BUT THE GNUFFS WILL RETURN IN "THE BATTLE FOR PICUS TOWER", COMING THIS SUMMER!

BIRTHRIGHT

They've found him! Alfon is safe!

Fine, fine. They're together and on their way back.

HA! And Jenna?

Praise be—.

May we yet hope.

And the Starship is nearly ready.

Sometimes I wish we could just fly away —

As for the Kashoka family, they must not be allowed to escape the planet.

I've been assured that the starship will not lift-off.

And what about Alfon?

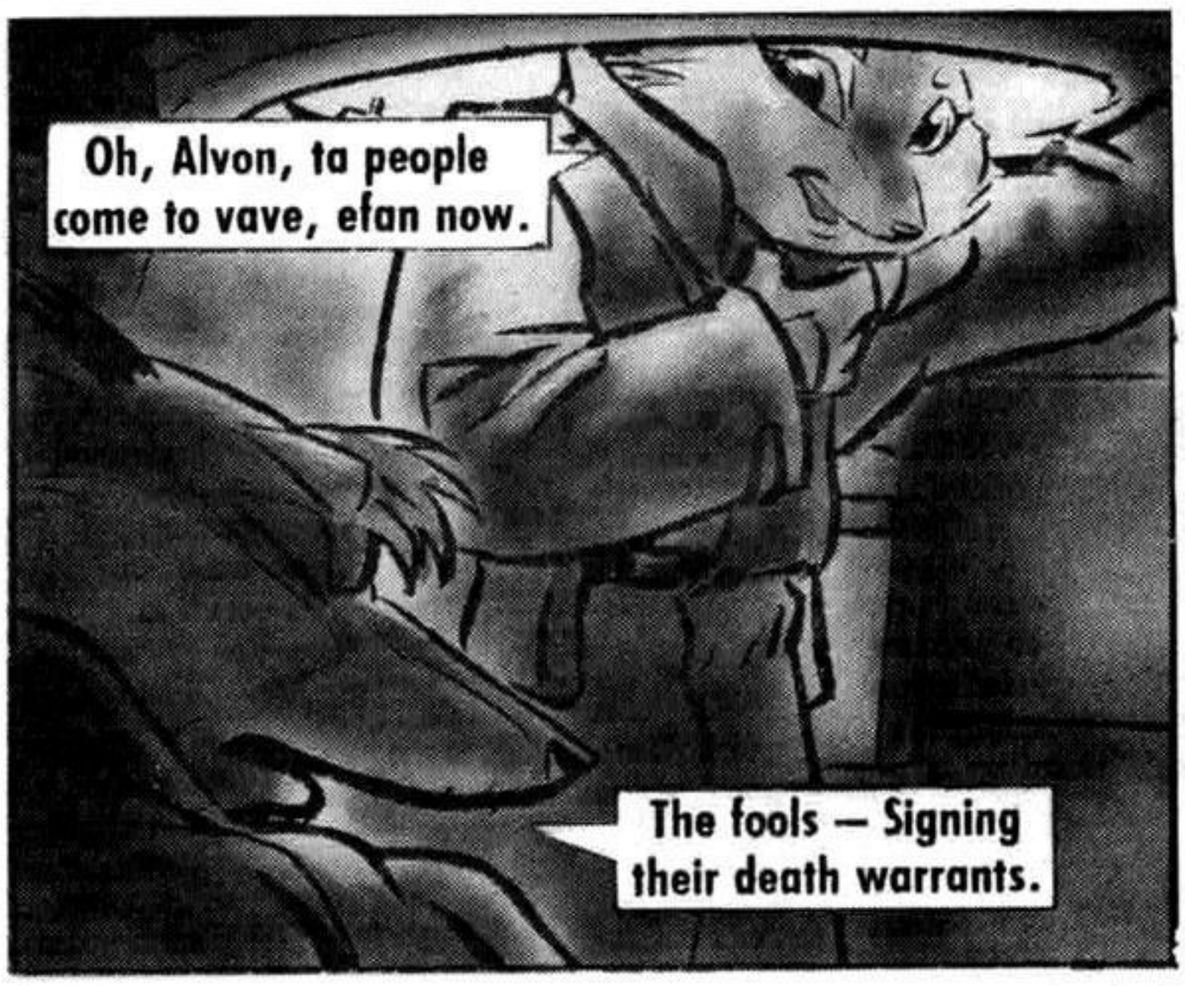
He and a party of his supporters are heading back to the Capital.

Not enough force to be a threat?

Of course not. But public sentiment is on his side.

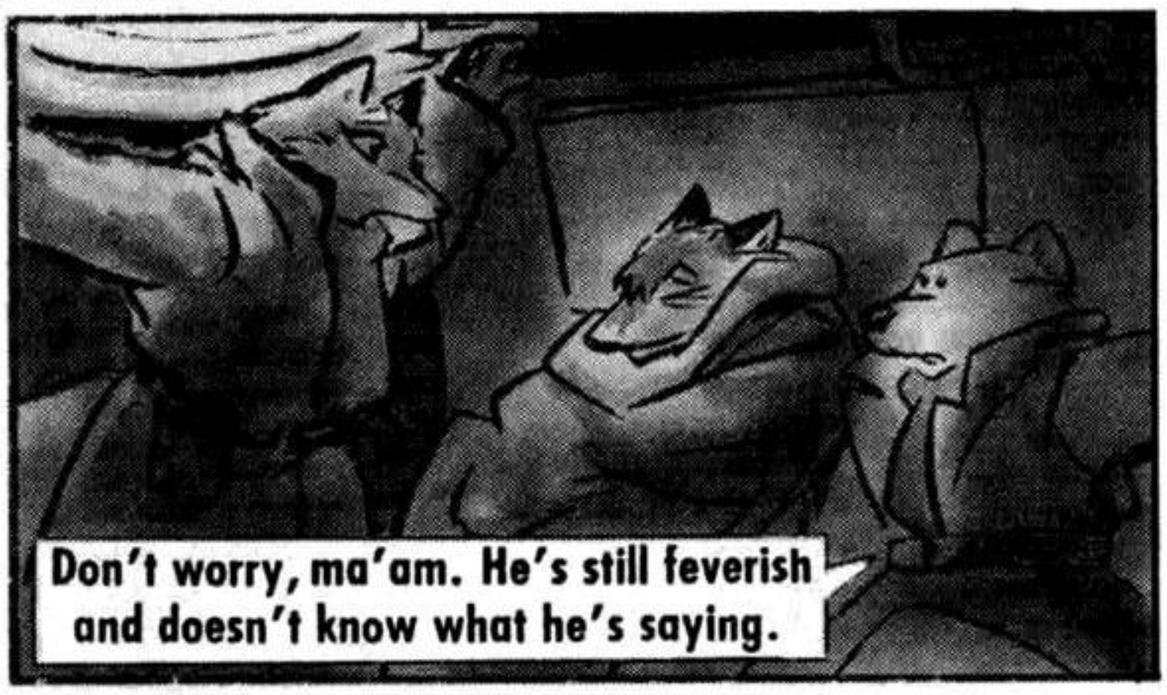
Bold thought. The hinterlands have been fully pacified. And the committee wants to implement their population reconsolidation.

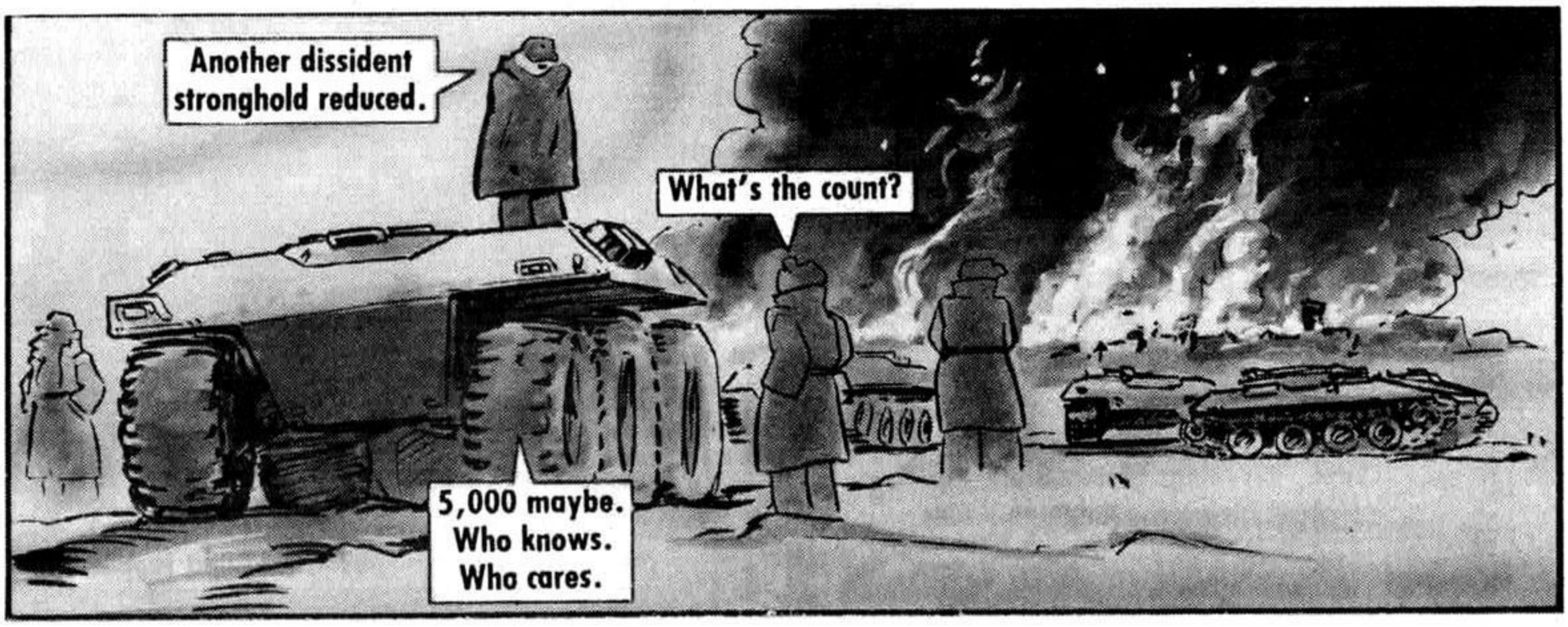
Call in all our field forces. Have them start plan "Reduction A" as they go. Let the Prince come back, and deal with all of them at once.


Oh, Alvon, ta people come to vave, efan now.
The fools — Signing their death warrants.

Not dat bat, eh?
I TOLD you — I've seen villages wiped out or turned into concentration camps by Shartoan troops loyal to the "reconstruction."

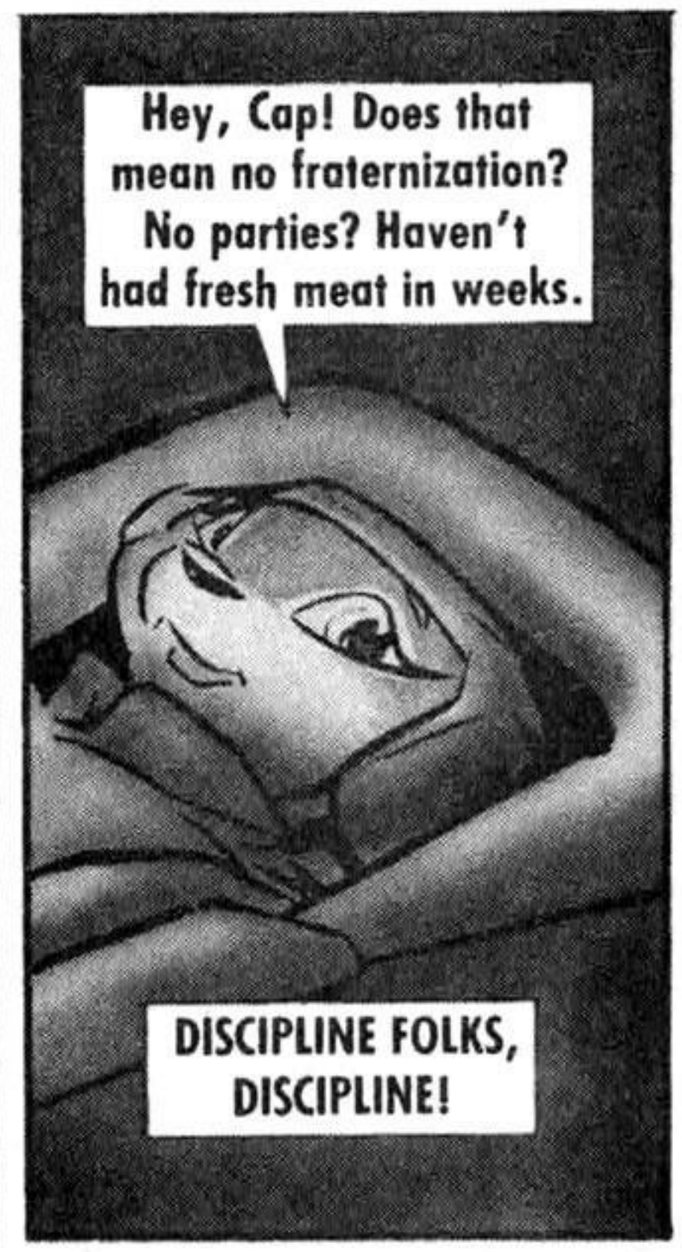
Going back to the capital will doom us.

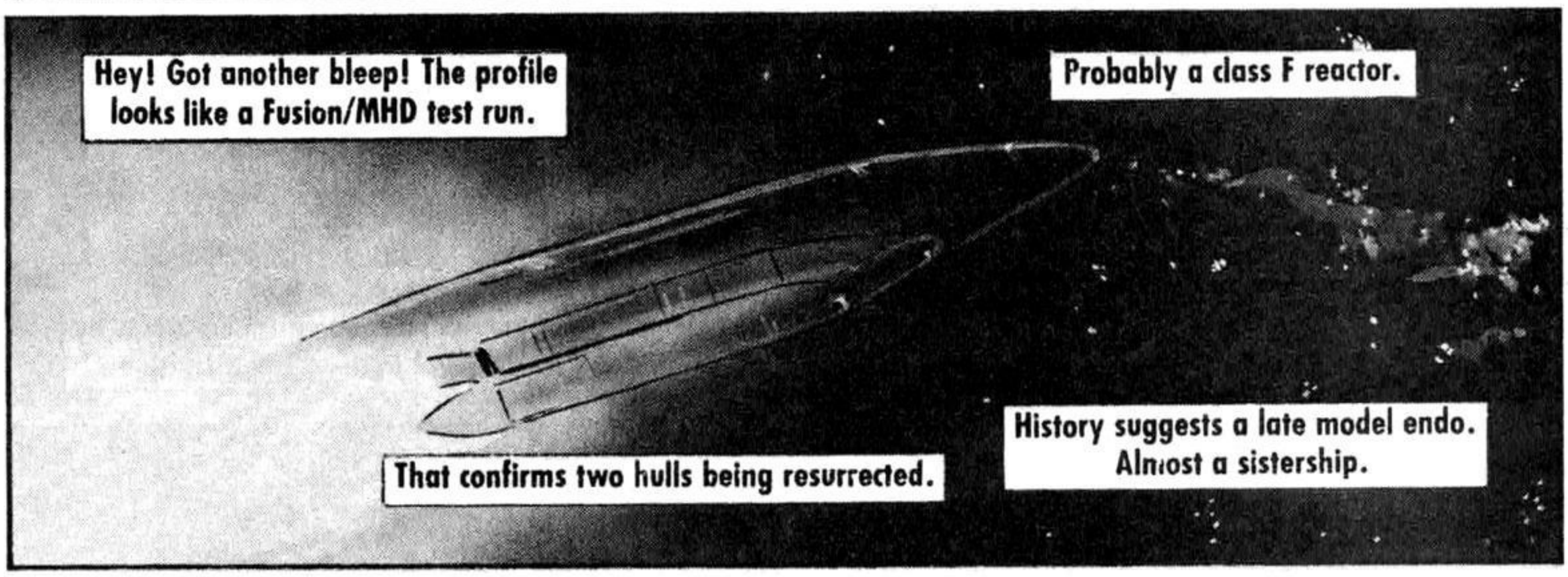

Don't worry, ma'am. He's still feverish and doesn't know what he's saying.

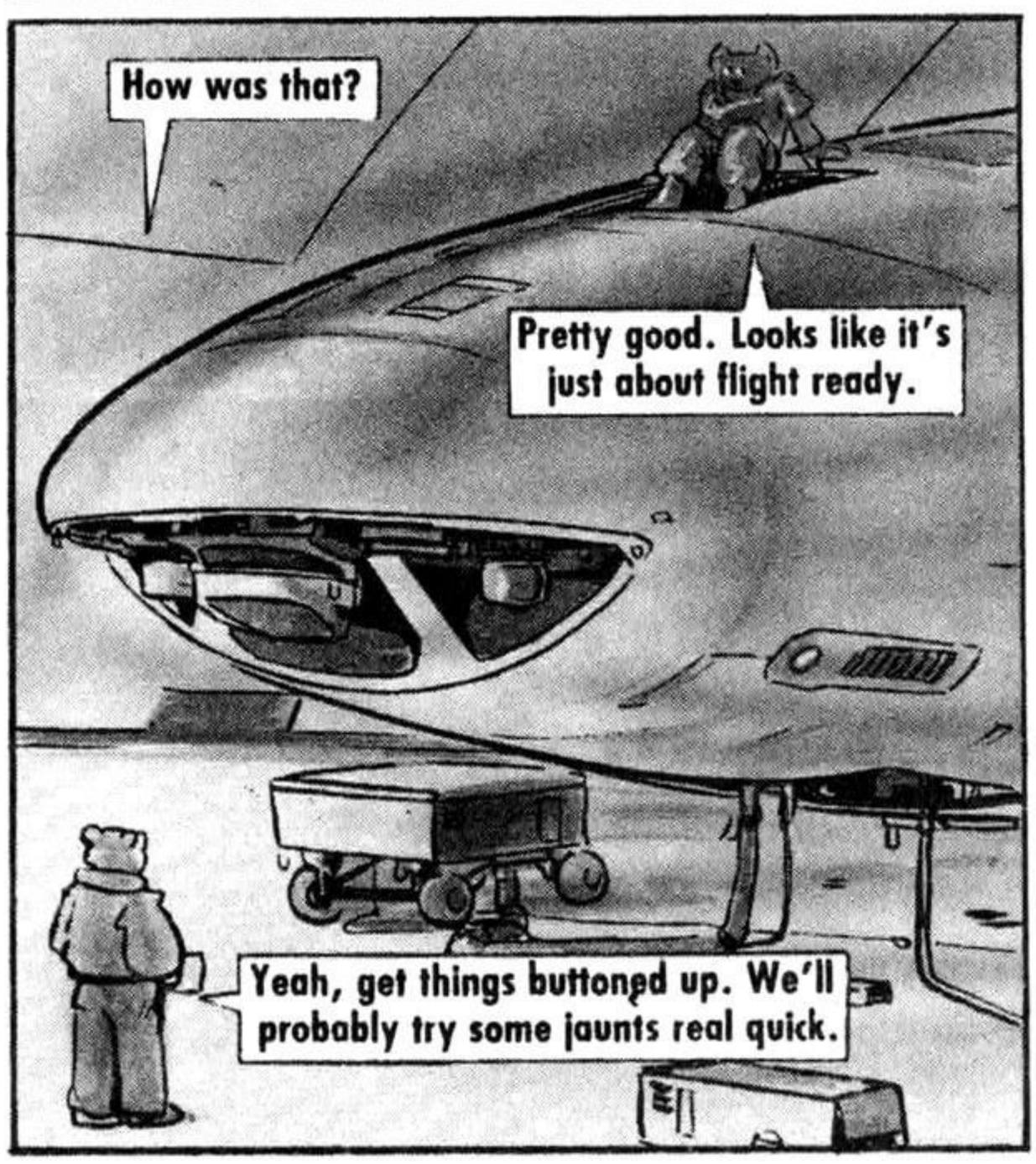

Another dissident stronghold reduced.
What's the count?
5,000 maybe. Who knows. Who cares.

OOG! Hey troops, six hours to planet.
YAH.
'Bout time.
Wake me when it's over.

Remember folks, these people haven't had contact in over 90 years.
So we're going to have to watch ourselves. Safeguard procedures and all that yak yak.


Hey, Cap! Does that mean no fraternization? No parties? Haven't had fresh meat in weeks.
DISCIPLINE FOLKS, DISCIPLINE!


Hey! Got another bleep! The profile looks like a Fusion/MHD test run.
Probably a class F reactor.
That confirms two hulls being resurrected.
History suggests a late model endo. Almost a sistership.

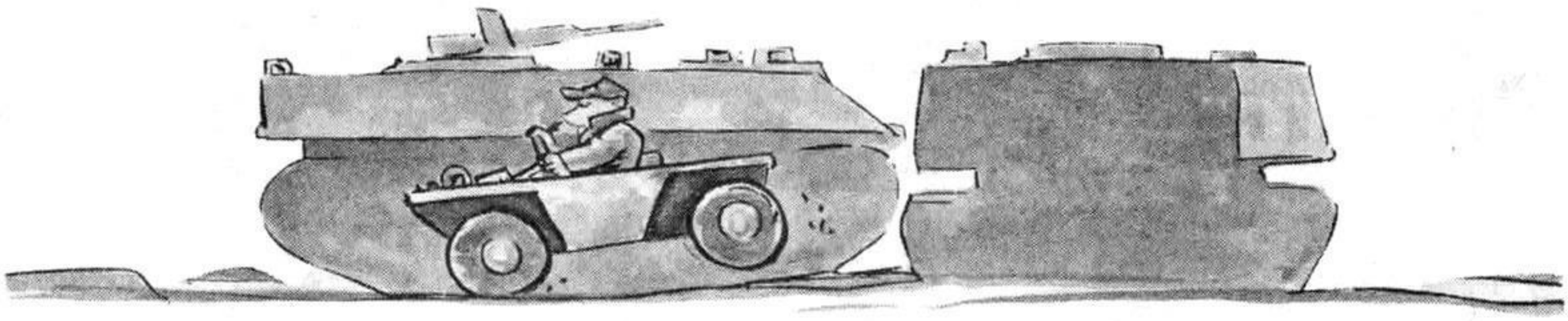

How was that?
Pretty good. Looks like it's just about flight ready.
Yeah, get things buttoned up. We'll probably try some jaunts real quick.

I'd like to eventually try another converter run-up.
But for now, let's see if we can get the computers operable enough for flight support.

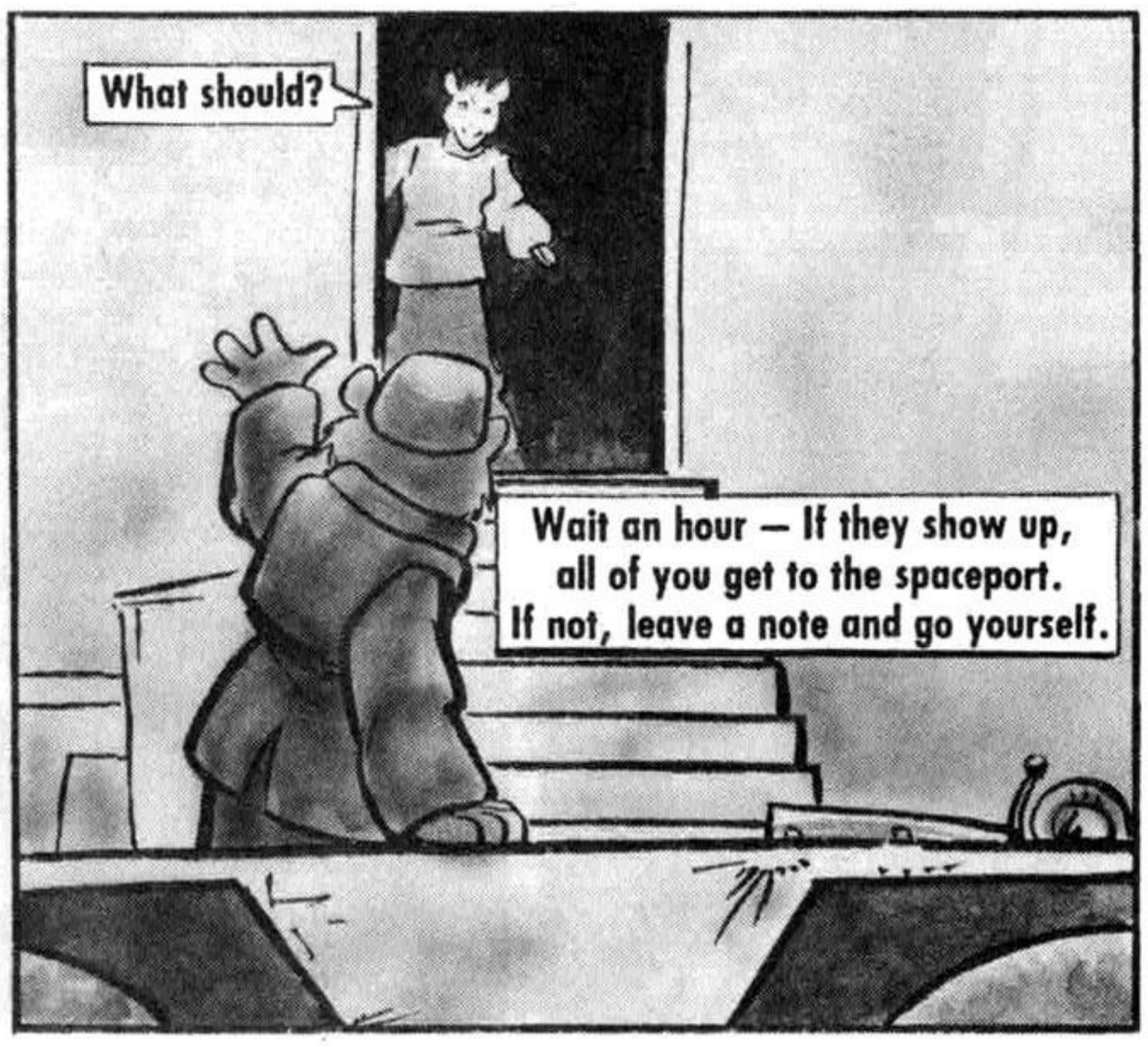
HAIO! Capt. Laputa at your service.
We're ready — Is the Prince okay?
Yeah — adequate. How bad is it?
The recons have the Capital all but ringed with armor.
Any chance of us —.
Not in my orders.
You take care of him, Ms Shodi.
Alvon carevul.
We'll disperse, head south.
I canno' —.
To leaf —.
Come! Come!

Sir! They're flying the Prince in.
WHAT!
Things have been too quiet, so I checked around. We've been found out and circumvented.

That's it. Let's do it now!
I agree.
We might not get all their supporters right away. But we'll eventually.



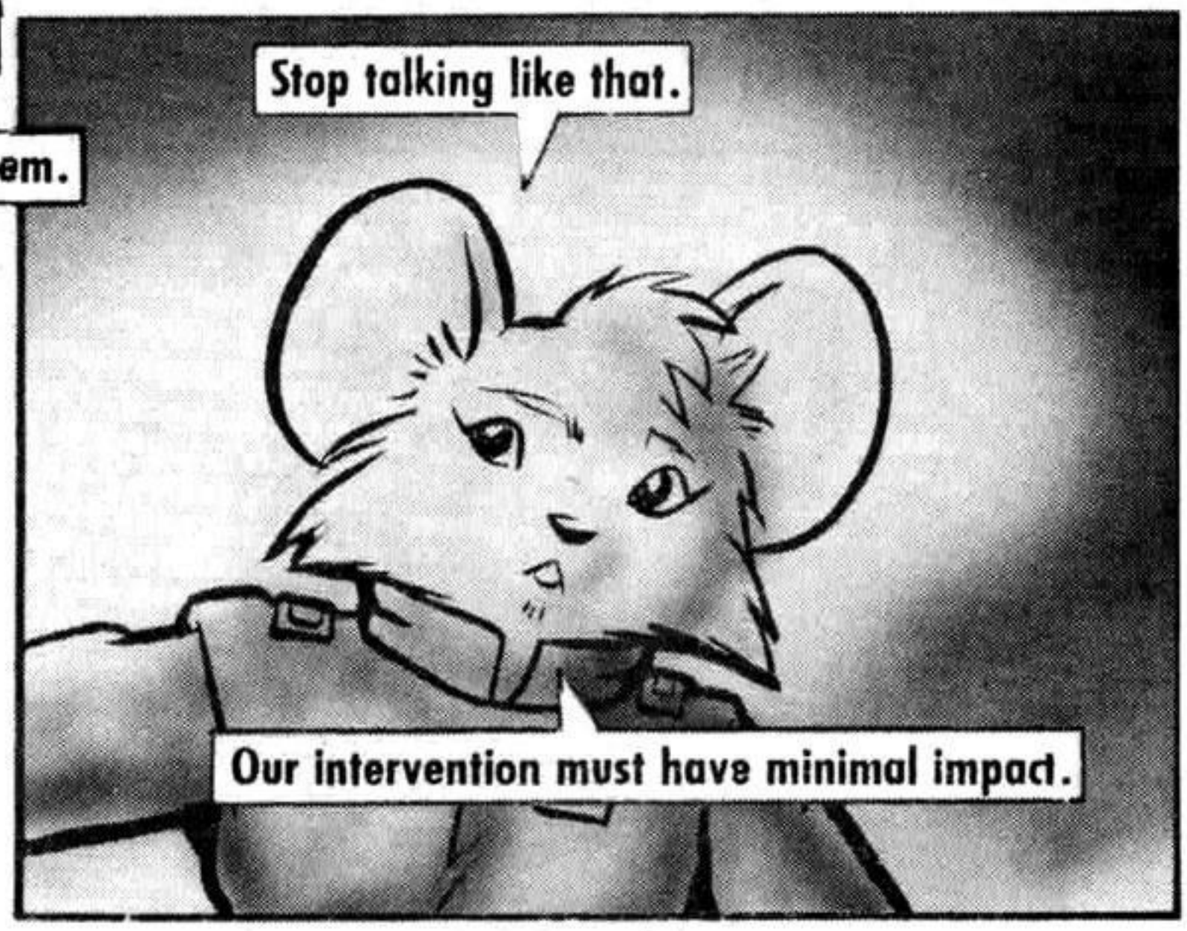
Ms Zonta! Where is the family?
Captain?
They went for a walk — ? —

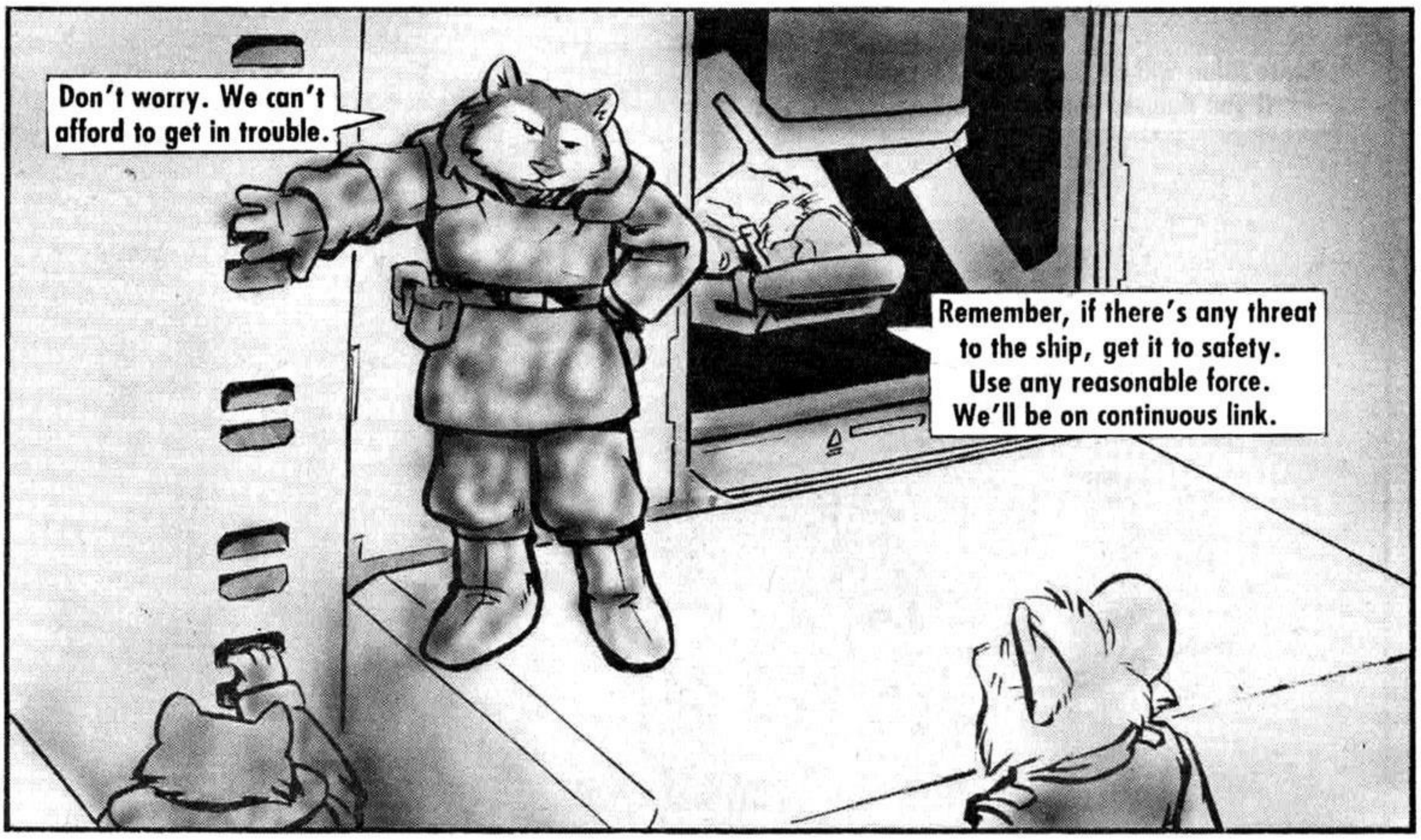

What should?
Wait an hour — If they show up, all of you get to the spaceport. If not, leave a note and go yourself.

Your excellency! The reconstructionists are moving against you now!
Come with me, quick!
Prince Alfon will be arriving any minute. If you choose, you can fly out.

Monitors suggest a civil war — rather ugly.
Does it look like we'll have any trouble?
I don't know Cap. One of the factions are virtually de-populating the countryside.

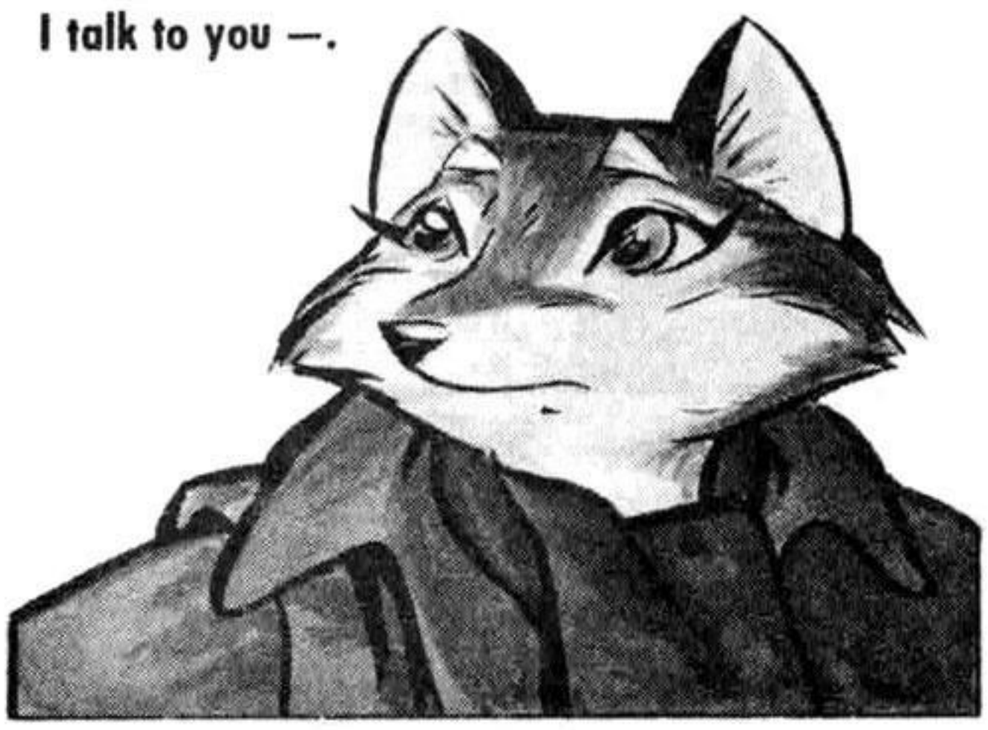
Well, if they're not reasonable —
we can persuade them.

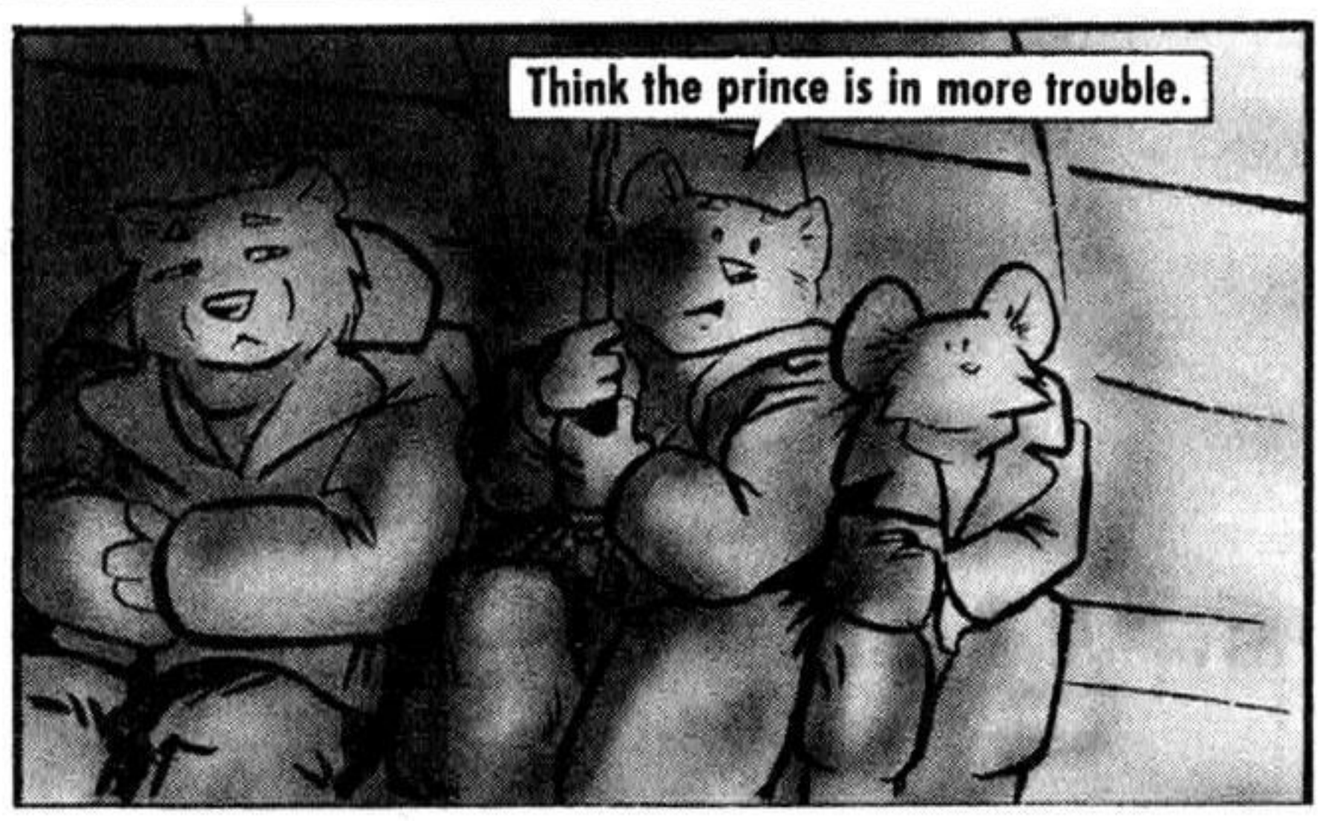

Stop talking like that.
Our intervention must have minimal impact.


Don't worry. We can't afford to get in trouble.
Remember, if there's any threat to the ship, get it to safety. Use any reasonable force. We'll be on continuous link.

We'll be in the capital shortly and things are beginning to heat up.

Ms Shodi — Can I talk to you —.



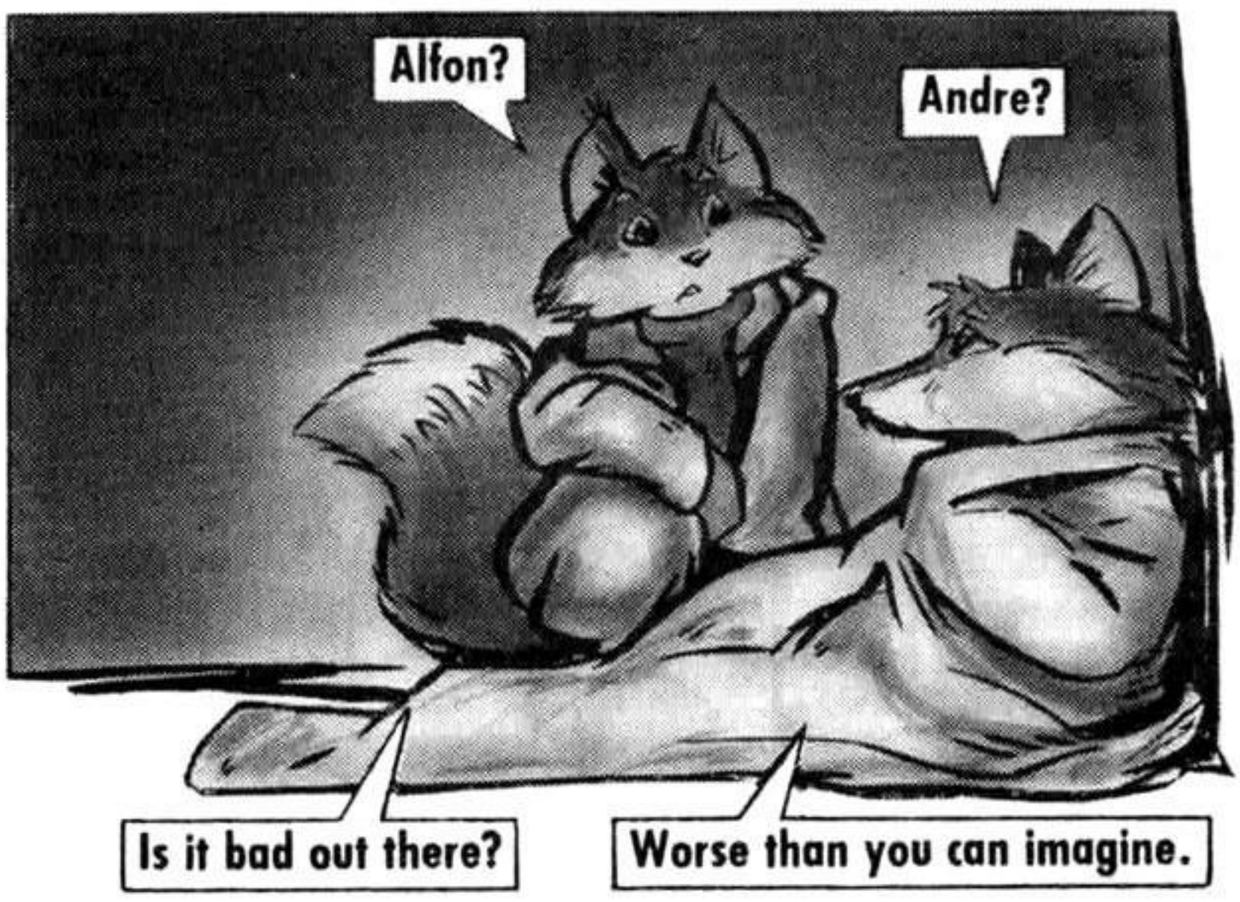


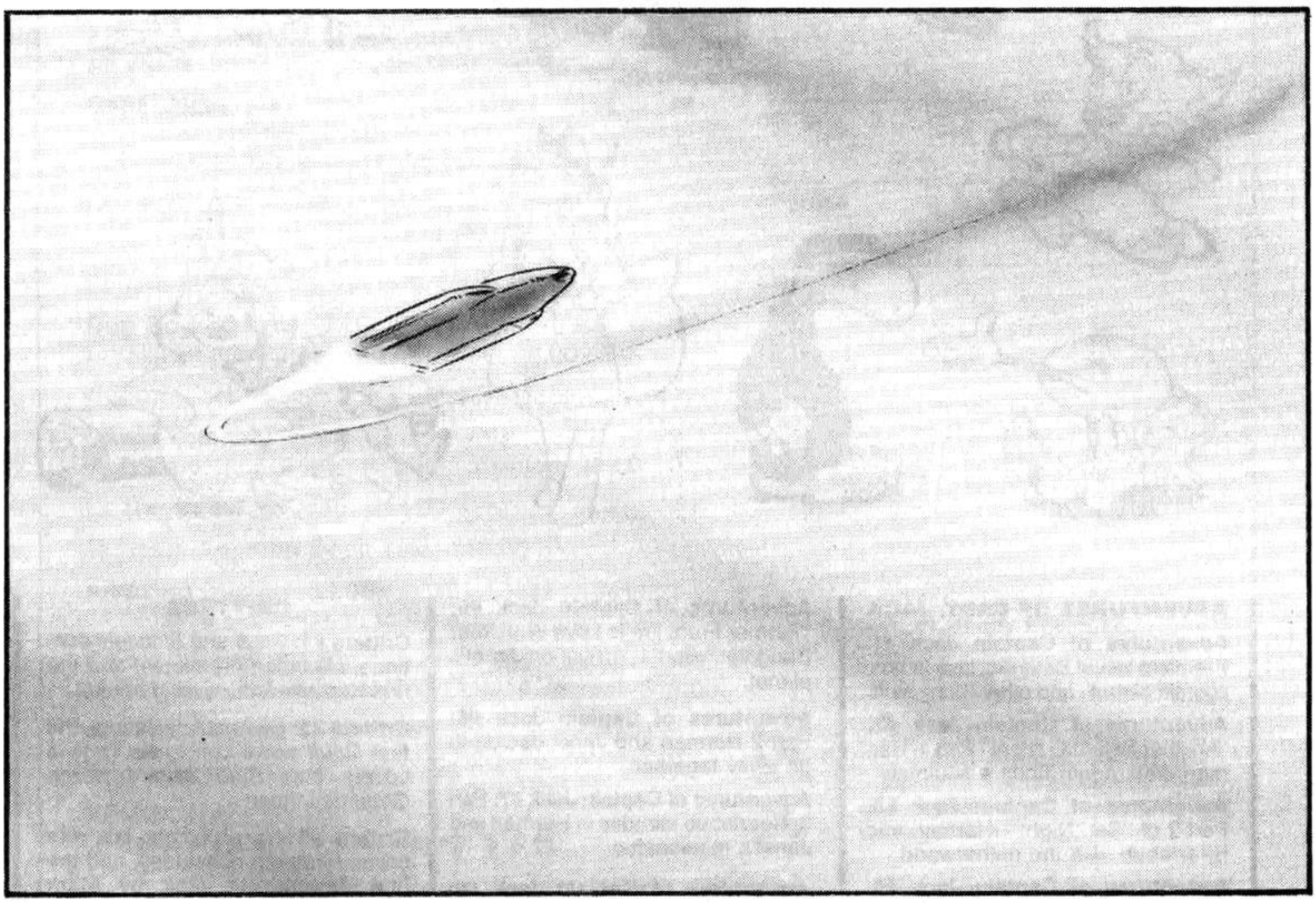
Wonder if we could help?

After all we've done?

Sure.

Look, those old spaceships look like new.
Is the prince really on board?
You haf serf't vel your prinz.
Ve canno' ask you furter beont tis. Ve can vly you to savty.
We're staying with you.
Humph. Damn straight. Is our duty.
Ve -- ve tank you — Tank you all.
Ho! It's prince Anton.





[TO BE CONTINUED]

Welcome to the Fantagraphics

ADVENTURES OF CAPT. JACK

Adventures of Captain Jack #1: Premiere issue! Beatniks, lava lamps, cosmic pinball, and other funny stuff.

Adventures of Captain Jack #2: "Another Saturday Night" Part 1: Herman dies, Adam finds a soulmate.

Adventures of Captain Jack #3: Part 2 of "Sat. Night": Herman and Beezlebub visit the netherworld.

Adventures of Captain Jack #4: Maniacal astronauts and more.

Adventures of Captain Jack #5: "Farmer Fred, I'm In Love With Your Daughter" Part 1: Arrival on Janet's planet.

Adventures of Captain Jack #6: Part 2 Herman and Janet decide to go away together.

Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Part 3: Beezlebub intrudes in Herman and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: Pool hustling and more.

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birthright* continue, *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birthright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper*!

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* tale with cover, *Birthright* concludes, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

Critters #7: Gnuff returns in *Animal Graffiti*, Usagi Yojimbo, and *De Grand Wa-Zoo* by Sam Kieth!

Critters #8: *Jack Bunny* by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Hallowe'en issue with Gnuff behind a mask, Lionheart's nightmare, and Dog Boy.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover and story, plus the continuations of *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #11: Special Christmas issue, featuring the conclusions of *Usagi Yojimbo, Gnuff*, and *Lionheart*, plus work by Mike Kazaleh, J. Holland and Ron Wilber, Mark Armstrong, Ty Templeton, Sam Kieth, Steve Lafler, and Ken Macklin. 68 pages!

Critters #12: *Birthright* returns, with a cover by Gallacci, plus Reed Waller and Kate Worley, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover and 16-page chapter, plus *Birthright*, *Surf-in' Neanderthals* by Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthright* and *Gnuff* continue.

Critters #15: *The Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken* both debut, and *Birthright* races on!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Journey off into surreal experiences with "Werewolf Bikers" and more!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

Dog Boy #3: Dog Boy shows how to publish your own comic book.

Dog Boy #4: Dog Boy goes to Hell, plus Dog Girl invades the White House. Guest starring Reagan!

HUGO

Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: Hugo becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: Hugo is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

MYRON MOOSE

Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wriggly books.

USAGI YOJIMBO

Usagi Yojimbo #1: Usagi journeys back to his youth and tells how he became a samurai. Plus: Fujitake!

Usagi Yojimbo #2: Usagi goes into training and has his first duel. Plus: A new strip by Dave Thorne.

BOOKS

The Beast Is Dead: Magnificent 1945 French graphic novel chronicling World War II as fought by animals. Stunning full-color work; hardcover!

Usagi Yojimbo Book One: Every *Usagi Yojimbo* story published to date collected in one handy 160-page volume, with a new Stan Sakai cover.

MAGAZINES

Amazing Heroes #8: Behind the scenes of DC's *Captain Carrot* comic with Scott Shaw! and Roy Thomas. Plus a funny-animal pictorial.

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on Neil the Horse and Dave Sim on Cerebus!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

The Comics Journal #73: Carl Barks featured, with long retrospective.

The Comics Journal #81-82: Mammoth interview with Dave (*Cerebus the Aardvark*) Sim.

The Comics Journal #99: Long interview with Arn (*Neil the Horse*) Saba.

OTHER STUFF

Anything Goes #2: Classic Alan Moore/Donald Simpson strip about death of comics includes several pages of Mike Kazaleh funny-animal characters. Plus Sam Kieth!

Anything Goes #3: Featuring a full-color Captain Jack story by Mike Kazaleh, Cerebus vignette by Dave Sim, and Cerebus cover by Neal Adams.

Doomsday Squad #3: Full-color Usagi Yojimbo back-up by Sakai.

Doomsday Squad #5: Full-color Captain Jack back-up by Kazaleh.

NEMO #21: 28 pages of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo* strip—a treat for classic funny-animal lovers!

PLEASE SEND ME THE FOLLOWING BACK ISSUES.
All are $2.25 apiece unless otherwise indicated.

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☐ 12-issue subscription to *Critters:* $17.00

Dog Boy ($2.00): ☐#1 ☐#2 ☐#3 ☐#4
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Anything Goes!: ☐#2 ☐#3

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[CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER]

CREDITS: "Nilson Groundthumper" was written and drawn by **Stan Sakai**. "Gnuff" was written, drawn, and toned by **Freddy Milton**, and translated by **Dwight R. Decker**; "Birthright II" was written, drawn, and toned by **Steven A. Gallacci**, with character inking by **Monika Livingstone**; typesetting by **Rocket Type**. The cover was painted by **Ken Macklin**. Separations on the cover by **S*M Graphics**. Printed at **Port Publications**. Production by: **Doug Erb**, art director, and **Teresa Moore**, production assistant. Typesetting by **Inez M. Gorell**. **CRITTERS** is edited by **Kim Thompson** for **FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**.

thanks and praise to Deal Whitley for entertaining us with "High Orbit" in **Albedo**. I really enjoy seeing Tracy turned into an anthropormorphic weasel. Best wishes for continued success with **High Orbit**.

One last thing: Please remember to run advance ordering information on the Usagi Yojimbo solo book and comic. Issue #1 will sell out fast, and I know I speak for many when I say, "We don't want to miss out!!"

P.S. **Critters** #11 was one of my favorite issues, but why on **newsprint**? Even with its double-size, I think paying for high-quality paper would have been worth it. I love your mag, and I hope to still be buying newsstand copies of **Critters** at retirement age.

Scott Horton
La Habra, CA

Thanks for your comments on ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK, a comic that deserves more success than it's gotten so far. Anyone who's been enjoying CRITTERS should check out Mike Kazaleh's book—after a bout with a very serious illness, Mike is back in the saddle, and the eighth issue, better than ever, should be out any day now. **—KT**

Dear Kim:
Congratulations on **Critters** #13: a truly fine comic book. The "Gnuff" story was superb. A real human (dragon, funny animal) interest story conveying warmth and compassion. Steve Gallaci was brilliant as usual. I do very much like his approach to storytelling and drawing. He is, to my mind, one of the best of the new cartoonists working these days. Steve has excellent concepts and a fresh approach to the medium. And the Mark Armstrong piece—simply funny as hell! You are doing a terrific job as the editor of **Critters**, making it a first-rate magazine. Thank you.

Now the bad news. I am disappointed and somewhat angry with the situation that has occurred with the production of **Critters**. Your editorial remarks in issue #13 about the paper quality, the reasons to use a "cheaper" grade of paper, the problems in the industry, etc. sound reasonable. Sure—measures sometimes must be taken to cut costs and survive in a competitive market. Sure.

I will not support the unjustified overpricing of any product; be it food, transportation, or whatever. An entertainment package is a "product" in the marketplace and as such must meet certain standards of quality. **Critters** started as a high-quality comic in both content and production, and was high-priced (I think) because of this. Well, the production quality has gone down. The price remains the same.

My interest in **Critters** is strong. I love the book. I do not want to see it become in any way second-rate. Please—raise the price! Publish less frequently if necessary, but please, do not cheapen the quality of the book in some absurd move to "survive."

The things that I value I maintain with affection. You, Kim, seem to be a person of integrity and intelligence. I beseech you to try to restore your comic to its previous level of quality so that **Critters** will remain dear to my heart. Let us not be the agents to another aspect of the general decline of quality in this world. We already have too many shoddy productions of some uncaring monolithic corporate entity. Too much shit is glutting the market as it is. Please do not allow **Critters** to become such.

My apologies if this causes you offense.

Laurence P. Kamp
Silver Spring, MD

Dear Mr. Thompson,
I just read **Critters** #13 and I am very impressed. Not for the stories, but for the editorial and letters page.

I find it admirable that you decided to use a cheaper grade of paper rather than hike up the cover price. You are not alone either. The people are Harrier Publishing have switched paper grades on its more popular titles. The only ones who should be upset with your decision are the people who buy them and save them for years without ever reading and enjoying them.

Something else I admire you for is printing the letter from Tim Fay. He had told me what it was about and doubted it would ever be printed. You see, very few publishers will print negative letters about their comics. I have a great respect for those who do. You should hear (or perhaps you have) the things said about **Critters**. If someone wants to criticize you they should send you a letter. Even if it doesn't get printed at least it gives you an idea of where you stand with the public.

Once again, thanks for giving me a conduit for my thoughts on **Critters**.

Noel Tominack
Indian Head, MD

Okay, here's where it's at.

At present, CRITTERS is selling around 10,000 copies—down from 16 to 17,000 just a half year ago. This kind of drop in sales has affected virtually every publisher. None of the alternative comics was making a whole lot of money on comics, and because of the way publishing works, losing one third to half your market does not mean losing one third to one half your profits—it means losing most or all of them. Often, it means ending up in the red.

I don't know what Laurence considers "unjustified" overpricing. If we switch all our books back to white, more expensive paper, we lose money. If we lose enough money, we go out of business. On the other hand, if we raise the price to $2.25 and go back to white paper, sales will almost certainly drop. And we'll lose money, etc.

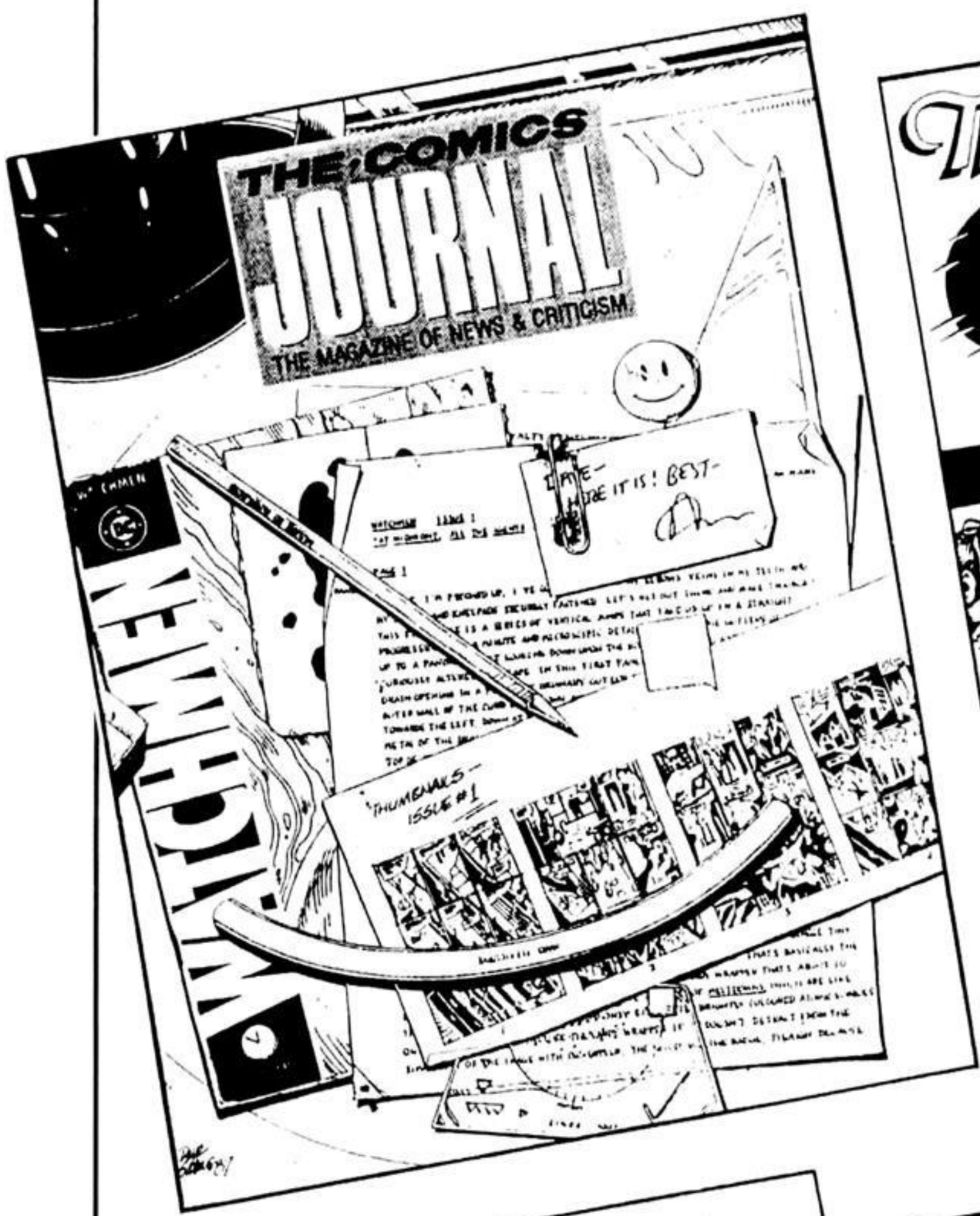
Seriously now, Laurence: How much has the move to cheaper paper diminished your enjoyment of CRITTERS? (I mean, you're quick to quantify your appreciaton of our "product"; let's take it to the logical extreme.) Fifty percent? Twenty percent? One percent? In actual fact, the printing isn't any worse—in fact, in some ways it's been better since we switched.

I confess: I'm fighting back a certain amount of annoyance here. I don't want to be too hard on you, since you (a) obviously care quite a bit about the book, and (b) obviously doesn't know what you're talking about in a lot of ways. (Your suggestion that moving to a slower frequency would alleviate our problems, for instance, makes no sense whatsoever.)

Look, I'm sorry if you feel ripped off; if we could, we'd be giving you 30 pages of comics for a buck and a quarter. But we CAN'T, because there are certain realities to any marketplace, and one of them is that every marketplace will change, and it will not necessarily change to the benefit of the customer. (Remember buying gasoline in the '70s?) This has occurred here, and there's really not a damn thing we can do about it.

Anyway, thanks to Noel for the kind words. **—KT**

COMING SOON FROM
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



When Matt Howarth Dreams

he dreams of faraway planets and planet-straddling worms. . .of Mad Empresses and alien Lucys-and-Ricardos. . .of pointillistic Pin'neds and cosmic nightmares. . .of aliens who think they're Indians and planetfuls of corpses and delicate living crystal beings. . .of a lonely girl who tries to kill herself but meets someone on the other side. . .

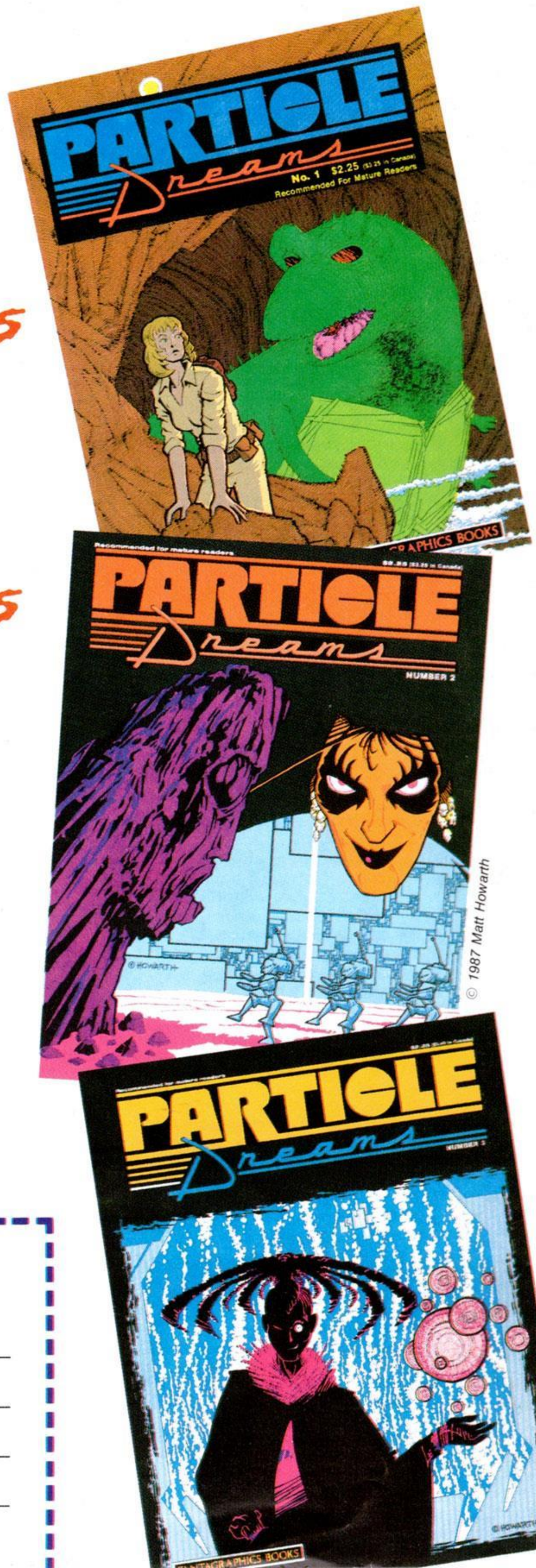
When Matt Howarth Dreams

he dreams mostly of Keif Llama, the spunky girl 'techie, whose planet-hopping troubleshooting precipitates her into some of the oddest planets and predicaments you've ever seen.

When Matt Howarth Dreams

he captures all these images and concepts and puts them all into ***Particle Dreams***, the stunning new comic magazine from Fantagraphics Books. . . six times a year, 32 pages of lovingly crafted black-and-white artwork and mind-expanding stories.

IF YOU THINK YOU'D ENJOY following Matt Howarth on his journeys to other worlds and other realities, fill out the coupon below. We think you'll enjoy ***Particle Dreams***. And—almost forgot—don't worry about the nightmares. After all, it's only a comic. Right?



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